

Beyond the Mountain: Joining Hands with the People of Haiti

Workshop 5: The Work Continues

Total time: two hours

Theme: hope for the future

Objectives

- Explore the vulnerabilities of young people in Haiti.
- Witness the work of an eye-to-eye partnership that focuses on the needs of children.
- Recognize ways your congregation currently supports children in the community and envision new ways it can support children at risk.
- Dream of a better Haiti and promise to join hands with UUSC and its partners to bring that future into reality.



Opening (2 minutes)

Materials needed

- Optional: chalice, candle, and lighter

Description

If you chose, light a chalice. Share this quote by novelist Walter Mosley as an opening reading: "The world isn't waiting for you to see it; rather, it is waiting to be built by you and others."

Activity 1: The Most Vulnerable (20 minutes)

Summary

We will hear — through video, testimonials, and additional information — about some of the issues facing young people in Haiti.

Objective

Inform participants of the vulnerabilities of children in Haiti.

Materials needed

- Computer with Internet access, projector, speakers, and screen

Preparation

If you will ask a participant to read the quote from the *ex-restavek*, print it out.

Description

In your own words, say the following: "Haiti is famous for leading the only successful slave rebellion in documented history. After the rebellion, slavery was officially outlawed. Yet people can be enslaved without shackles and bars. Lacking options or the freedom to thrive are other forms of slavery.

"Since the earthquake, marginalized people who previously had few options now have even fewer. This includes children and youth, many of whom lost families in the earthquake. Before the earthquake, over 300,000 children were in Haitian orphanages. Estimates say thousands, perhaps tens of thousands, more young people were orphaned by the earthquake. This is truly a crisis. Many of the orphaned children have extended families who might take them in, but many records were destroyed and elder family members killed, so tracing these families will take some time. Meanwhile, most of these orphans must live in the camps for displaced persons. Young people are desperate to survive in the camps, leading some to commit crimes. Many young women, including children as young as eight, rely on prostitution to keep provide food for themselves and other family members."

Watch "Little Girls Lost," a short video from the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting. Caution the group that they will hear stories about prostitution and rape but not graphic descriptions. It contains interviews from a few youth who have had to turn to prostitution since the earthquake to survive. After the video, ask the following questions:

- Aside from the actual act of prostitution, what other troublesome situations do these young girls encounter? [Participants may mention beatings, pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (including HIV/AIDS), social

ostracizing, and bleak futures due to all of the above.]

- How has the earthquake led to conditions that exacerbate the problem of child prostitution? [Mention insecure living quarters in the camps (for example, camps that are unlit at night, tents that cannot be locked or can be broken in with a simple knife) that cannot protect against rape, loss of parents to protect children, disintegration of the entire social structure (such as the police), and lack of food, proper health care, and other resources.]
- How does the violence against women (which the Commission of Women Victims for Victims, or KOFAVIV, advocates against) help create child prostitutes?
- What makes the biggest impression upon you from the interviews?

These young girls are the most striking example of how class, gender, and age meet to oppress the most vulnerable members of society. As we have seen when discussing race and class, Haitian society unfortunately still carries with it some holdover beliefs and practices from the time of the French slaveholders. Some historians link slavery's disregard of children (because they could not produce the same workload as adults) to modern Haitian's allowance of a system of child slavery.

Even before the earthquake, young people were vulnerable in Haiti, as they are here in the United States and around the world. One institution in Haiti that has come under harsh criticism concerns *restaveks*. Literally translated, it means "one who stays with." *Restaveks* are children sent by low-income Haitian families to live in another household, sometimes with relatives or associates in the cities. It's a longtime practice in families that have difficulty feeding all the mouths in the home. In theory, the child lives with a new family and performs tasks in exchange for room, board, and access to an education. In reality, though, the practice resembles what some call child slavery. *Restaveks* often are abused, physically, emotionally, and sexually. Many are underfed, without beds, clothing, or any personal belongings. Very few are granted an education, since most Haitian schools are private with expensive fees that many host families refuse to pay. Upon reaching adolescence or if they start to protest their treatment, *restaveks* are often turned out into the streets to fend for themselves, which often results in prostitution or criminal activity.

Read or ask a volunteer to read this description from an *ex-restavek*:

I grew up sleeping under the kitchen table. I got up early, swept the yard, washed the car, fetched water, emptied the chamber pot. I went to the market, bathed the children, walked the children to school, and I couldn't come to school. I never ate with the family. I was abused physically. I was abused emotionally with bad words.

Some *restaveks* have even emigrated from Haiti to the United States with families that are part of the Haitian diaspora but remain enslaved in the United States by their host families. Some, like the person quoted above, have escaped to freedom.

Lack of educational opportunities, the *restavek* system, and child prostitution are a few of the issues faced by children in Haiti, historically and today, that make justice for children an uphill effort. Let's learn about one of UUSC's partners, Camp Oasis, that is trying to create a different future for the children of Haiti.



Activity 2: Spotlight on Partners — Camp Oasis (15 minutes)

Summary

We will study Camp Oasis and its work with female orphans.

Objectives

Witness the work of an eye-to-eye partnership that focuses on the needs of children.

Materials needed

- A computer with Internet access, projector, speakers, and screen

Preparation

Test your equipment for accessing UUSC's website and watching the Camp Oasis video.

Description

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

Go to the video "Camp Oasis," available online as part of the Haiti Curriculum: Beyond the Mountain playlist at youtube.com/uusc4all or on UUSC's *Beyond the Mountain* DVD. Say, in your own words, "In every workshop, we have met one of the UUSC's partners in Haiti. Each of the UUSC's partners is seeking justice for at least one marginalized community. Today, we have discussed one group whose vulnerability has increased since the earthquake: children and youth. You will hear from a partner that supports children."

Watch the short video.

Reflect on the following questions:

- What is Camp Oasis providing that its 40 girls might not get otherwise?
- What do you know about the lives of some Haitians that you did not know before?
- What inspires you about the work of Camp Oasis?

Invite any other reflections.

Activity 3: Taking Care of Our Young (30 minutes)

Summary

We will celebrate ways the congregation supports young people, envision new ways to nurture marginalized youth, and create a mural with illustrations of these actions.

Objectives

- Acknowledge the way(s) the congregation currently supports children locally.
- Envision new ways to support local children.

Materials needed

- Newsprint, markers, and tape
- Slips of paper and writing instruments

Preparation

In the center of the sheet of newsprint, draw a representation of a UU house of worship. Make it colorful and attractive. Draw multicolored rays emanating from the building. Participants will add their drawings at the end of the rays.

Description

Post the newsprint depicting the house of worship. Ask the group, in your own words, "You just heard about Camp Oasis and what they are doing to help the children of Haiti. What other partners have we talked about that work with children and in what way? [Possible responses: KOFVIV helps girls in the camps that have been victims of gender violence; APROSIFA provides a day care and clinic for children and art programs for youth.]

"By supporting the UUSC, you are helping the children of Haiti. But children are vulnerable not just in Haiti or developing countries. Here in the United States, we have children who are at risk and need our support. What children or youth in your community need allies? [List suggestions on newsprint. Participants may mention foster children; gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer children and youth; children from families suffering financial hardship and homelessness; critically ill children; children of immigrants; children with mental illness, etc.]

"Think about your congregation. Think of how your congregation is currently helping the children in your community. Perhaps congregants serve at soup kitchens that are frequented by families or are part of the Interfaith Hospitality Network. Perhaps they collect toys and other gifts for families during the holidays. In a few minutes, I'll invite you to depict these actions on the posted newsprint with the UU congregation in the center. Take just a moment to think about the current work of your congregation. Make notes on the slips of paper, if that will be helpful. [Give the group one minute to think.]

"Now think about marginalized children and youth in your congregation that have issues that your congregation is not addressing. How could you do more? Would your congregation adopt a school and help tutor children? What about starting or supporting a local gay-straight alliance in your community? Are there members of your congregation that could offer unpaid or paid

internships to youth from lower-income neighborhoods? It does not have to be a big, ongoing effort. It could be a one-time project. Does your city sponsor a program to send food home to lower-income children on the weekend? If so, could you lead a fundraiser to buy backpacks for this program? Take a minute to think about and write down any ideas you think are realistic right now for your congregation to develop. [Let one minute elapse.]

“Now, I invite you to take markers or crayons and illustrate at least two activities on the newsprint: one program of your congregation that currently exists and helps local children and youth, and one program you would like to see your congregation develop.”

Let participants draw for 10 minutes. They can work together, if they like, or in teams if inspired by the same ideas. Give them a five-minute and two-minute warning.

Afterward, let them look at each other’s work and ask each other questions for another five minutes. End by encouraging everyone to realize that they can make this happen — the world they illustrated is waiting to be built by them and others!

If you have a Polaroid camera, ask everyone to gather for a group photo. Tape the photo to the top of the artwork. Otherwise, ask everyone to draw themselves into the artwork and post it where it will be visible to the congregation as a whole, along with any other posted work from these workshops.



Activity 4: Supporting the Dreamers and the Dream (50 minutes)

Summary

We will reflect upon our own dreams and who supported us to make our dreams a reality. We will also dedicate ourselves to supporting the dreams of a better future for Haiti.

Objective

Dream of a more just Haiti.

Materials needed

- Art supplies such as paper, markers, pastels, crayons, pencils, collage material
- Painter’s tape
- Bottles of bubble solution and blowing wands

Preparation

Find a suitable place to display the artwork for at least one week.

Description

Point out that Lionel Pressoir started Camp Oasis because of a dream to help the children of Haiti, but he is not done dreaming. Ask for volunteers to repeat the bigger dreams Lionel has for Oasis.

Then, say, in your own words, “Take a moment. Close your eyes. Think of a time when you dreamed big — really big, an impossible dream. Maybe you were a child or a young adult. Maybe you hold a big dream right now. Who supported you in your dream? There are many different ways to support: by giving money, time, or hard work; by facilitating strategic planning; and even by just listening to someone’s dream. Think of your big dream. Pick someone who has supported you in the dream. How did they support you? How did their support make you feel? What did their support mean to you? What difference did it make in your life?”

“Now, I invite you to turn and share some of your thoughts, if you are comfortable doing so, with a partner. Each person can share for two minutes. I’ll let you know when two minutes are up so the other partner can share.”

After four to five minutes, gather the larger group back together. If time permits, quickly go around the room and ask participants to complete this sentence: “I was supported in my dream by someone who _____.”

Ask participants to hold on to that feeling of being supported.

Ask the group to think about what they have heard about Haiti and the work of UUSC with the Haitian people. How has UUSC supported Haiti? Ask participants to be as specific as possible. List several examples on newsprint.

Now ask participants to put themselves in the picture. Ask them, “How do you see yourself supporting the Haitian people and/or the UUSC?” Here are a few suggestions:

- Perhaps you dream of going on a UUSC volunteer trip. Remind participants that they can visit UUSC’s website to find out about upcoming trips.
- Individuals and congregations can help financially. UUSC’s website has more information on ways to give, including joining UUSC. Becoming a member of UUSC not only gives financial support to its programs (which are not funded through the UUA) but also enables supporters to stay abreast of developments and opportunities to join hands with the Haitian people.
- You could hold a worship service at your congregation or a workshop at a district or other UU gathering to help spread the word of UUSC’s work in Haiti. Resources for designing a worship service can be found at uus.org/haiti/forcongregations.
- You might act locally with members of the Haitian diaspora to support legislation (uus.org/take_action) or lead a drive to send supplies to schoolchildren, hospitals, or camps.
- Contact UUSC if you need assistance with other creative ideas.

Ask everyone to take a couple of minutes to decide how they will continue the work started in these workshops. How will they join hands with the people of Haiti?

Go outside. Pass out the bubbles. Invite participants to make a bubble promise to Haiti. This involves saying the promise aloud or to yourself, blowing a bubble, and imagining that bubble floating all the way to Haiti. Imagine the people of Haiti receiving the bubble and feeling your hand in theirs as they struggle to create a better world for themselves and all of us. A stronger, more stable, peaceful Haiti makes for a stronger world.

May their work and ours be blessed and fruitful. Amen.



Closing (3 minutes)

Materials

- Optional: chalice, candle, and candle snuffer

Description

Ask everyone to hold hands for the final benediction. If applicable, extinguish the chalice. Share this closing reading by Kelly Weisman Asprooth-Jackson, "I Send You Out":

I send you out now, to share yourself with the world
May its promise and complexity set your mind ablaze
May you hold fast to what your life has taught you
May you question everything
And when you have changed the world,
And the world has changed you,
May you return again, to this place,
And share what you have learned with us.

Alternate activities

Planning a project

Activity 4: Supporting the Dreamers and Dreams asked participants to commit to specific actions to continue supporting Haiti. Why not follow through on one or two of these actions as a group?

Inspire the group of participants to decide upon an action to support Haiti. It could be applying to take part in a UUSC JustWorks service-learning trip, raising money, holding a worship service, or

conducting workshops for children (using the activities included in the five workshops of this program). Welcome others in the congregation and community to help. Consider working with the justice committee, religious education committee, or the minister to plan the project. If others are involved, include educational information about the crisis in Haiti, the work of UUSC's partners, and how their support will help Haiti.

After completing the action, reflect upon the work, asking the following questions:

- Did we meet our goal?
- How will our action help create a better Haiti?
- Did participants learn more about Haiti than they knew before?
- How will we continue this work?

Kids with Cameras

Kids with Cameras is an organization that gives marginalized young people a chance to tell their story through photographs. View the photos from their Haiti project. All of these children are from a school for *restaveks*. Discuss the images, stories, and your reactions to them. How do their stories relate to what you have experienced during this curriculum?

Want to go further? Plan a project for your local community. Whose voice is seldom heard in your community? Give them disposable cameras and instructions. Develop the film and let them choose photos for a photo gallery. Ask photographers to include a short bio and captions for the photos. Create a slide show or a printed gallery and hold an opening with the photographers. Invite members of the press. Thank the photographers for sharing their stories with the community.

Children's activity: Hope for Haiti (60 minutes)

Objectives

- Learn about Camp Oasis and how it helps the children of Haiti.
- Plan a project to continue their work in supporting Haiti.
- Send bubbles of hope to Haiti.

Materials

- A copy of the book *Hope for Haiti*, by Jesse Joshua Watson
- Computer, projector, speakers, and screen or a television and UUSC's *Beyond the Mountain* DVD
- Bubble wands, dishwashing detergent or baby shampoo, water, sugar, and dishes
- Optional: poster with children's version of the UU Seven Principles or newsprint with them written out
- Optional: soccer ball and goal markers

Preparation

Check your equipment before the workshop.

Description

If appropriate, start this session with a favorite chalice lighting of the children.

Part 1: Review (5 minutes)

Tell the children that this is the last session in the Haiti program. They have heard about Haitian history, culture, effects of the 2010 earthquake, and how the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee is working with grassroots organizations in Haiti to improve life for everyone.

Ask what they have learned about Haiti that they did not know before. Remind them of some of the activities they enjoyed the most. If any remnants from previous sessions are still in the room (such as artwork), use them to spark memories.

Part 2: Hope for Haiti (15 minutes)

Ask, "How do you feel about the future of Haiti — hopeful or hopeless?" We hope that the children will answer, "Hopeful!" Tell the group that so many people in Haiti are hopeful and working hard toward building a better future, and that one of the best ways we can support them is to remain hopeful ourselves. Here is a story about staying hopeful.

Read *Hope for Haiti* aloud.

Ask the following questions:

- What was your favorite part of the story?
- After the earthquake, thousands of families were left homeless, many children lost their parents, and food and medical supplies were in short supply. If you can imagine yourself in a position like this, why would it still be important for you to play?
- Have you ever been very sad because something bad happened? What made you feel better? Did your family help? Your friends? Thinking about something else? Going about your normal routine?
- UUSC works with partners in Haiti to help people obtain housing, food, medical supplies, and jobs. One partner, Camp Oasis, is providing for 40 young girls. Show the video, "Camp Oasis," available online as part of the Haiti Curriculum: Beyond the Mountain playlist at youtube.com/uusc4all or on UUSC's *Beyond the Mountain* DVD.
- The children of Camp Oasis go to school. When they come home, how do you think they spend their time? [Expect answers such as homework, chores, gardening, drawing, and play. If they need help, remind them of the scenes from the video and what they saw children doing.] Is this different from how you spend your time after school? If so, how? If not, what does that mean?
- Share with children the children's version of the UU Seven Principles and ask them how UUSC's work with its partners in Haiti affirms our UU values:
 1. Each person is important.
 2. Be kind in all you do.
 3. We're free to learn together.
 4. We search for what is true.
 5. All people need a voice.
 6. Build a fair and peaceful world.
 7. We care for Earth's lifeboat.

Part 3: Planning a project (30 minutes)

Invite the children to plan together a project to support the children of Haiti. Consider working with the justice committee, the religious education committee, or the minister to plan the project. Possible ideas include selling refreshments at the congregation and local sports games teams to raise funds, leading a children's chapel, leading a portion of the regular Sunday service, or donating the plate to UUSC.

Part 4: Wish bubbles for Haiti (10 minutes)

Mix water, dishwashing detergent or baby shampoo, and sugar to create a good consistency for blowing bubbles. As part of your closing for the session, go outside with the bubble solution. Ask children to say aloud a wish for the future of Haiti and blow a wish bubble. Imagine the bubbles carrying their good wishes, love, and support all the way to Haiti. If possible, invite other members of the congregation to blow hope bubbles for Haiti. If the children participate in a Sunday service concerning Haiti or children's chapel, offer the bubble-blowing activity at the conclusion of worship.

If you have additional time, play soccer.

Want to know more?

Find out more about *restaveks* and the efforts to end this system by exploring the Restavek Freedom Foundation and racematters.org, or by reading articles from Reuters and Newsweek. Bubble-town has recipes and other information on making bubbles.



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