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LAMP for HAITI

SHINING A LIGHT ON HEALTH, PARTNERSHIP AND COMMUNITY

WINTER
2023

As the dark of night follows the light of day, we anticipate the light will come again. Life in the Haitian capital of Port-au-Prince is grindingly difficult today, but we anticipate that a calm is on the horizon. And so we look forward to 2024, but first it's appropriate for retrospection, introspection, circumspection.

Looking back on this year, Lamp once again found ourselves as one of a dwindled number of centers providing care to residents of the notorious and sprawling shantytown known as Cité Soleil. For many, the gang violence there drove them to leave the area, gone to stay with other family or friends in the rural provinces, seeking safety. Those left behind are those with no other choice. They are the most vulnerable of the vulnerable, the most impoverished and most lacking in resources. They have no options to leave, nowhere to go.

And Lamp will not leave either. We will continue to accompany. We will continue to think creatively.



We will continue to act in a way consistent with our mission, a mission that builds community by improving healthcare, and that fosters kinship locally and internationally.

This past year especially, we were unable to get our staff to our main health center consistently, as roads and other thoroughfares were often controlled by bandits. In response, we opened a second site, located just outside Cité Soleil and accessible by foot or a short ride on a taptap. We provide transportation fare for those residents who need to see us, who might not otherwise



Triage at Haiti Communiterie

be able to come. We expanded our mobile clinic program, holding them in churches and schools in areas just outside of Cité Soleil, hiring additional staff and, at times, treating nearly 500 patients in a single day.

It's clear to me that despite two major wars, climate change, AI, and cultural differences in our world, internalizing Lamp's affirmation that "we are one human family" is perhaps as necessary today as it has ever been. That you are reading this now, and that you continue to engage in Lamp for Haiti tells me that this is no mere aspirational "idea" for you, any more than it is for me. Lamp for Haiti is impacting peoples' lives, is saving lives, now. It's improving families' health and strengthening community. Seeing this project in a circumspect way allows us to recognize that this work changes us, as it does our patients. Of course, those changes are different, but we're changed nonetheless. You, our staff, our Board, the residents of the Cité Soleil community – together we'll usher in a new year, and I have no doubt, Lamp will continue to be a warm beacon of light, a soothing balm.

My profound thanks for your friendship, and my best to you and your families in this holiday season!

A Timeline of Haitian History

Here is a brief timeline to catch you up on some historical events that may be referred to, from time to time, in the media.

- **7,000 years ago**, the islands of the Caribbean are populated by unnamed foraging peoples. They are supplanted at some point by pottery-making farmers, known as the Taino, who migrate from South America.
- **1492**: Christopher Columbus establishes a Spanish settlement near Cap-Haitien. Within 30 years, approximately 90% of Tainos on Hispaniola (the island where Haiti is located) are dead due to disease and forced labor in gold and silver mines.
- **1505**: Columbus' son Diego starts the African slave trade to the island.
- **1697**: The Spanish cede control of the western third of Hispaniola to France ("Haiti").
- France continues the brutal slave economy, with sugar as the key product. Approximately one million slaves are brought into the colony over the next one hundred years. It is the most lucrative of all French colonial possessions, by far.
- **1804**: Haiti declares independence, the most successful slave rebellion in history. The rebellion includes the defeat of one of Napoleon's largest military deployments, a fleet commanded by his brother-in-law. Toussaint Louverture was the key architect of the victory.

- **1825**: With French warships anchored off the coast, President Boyer of Haiti agrees to pay 150 million gold francs as reparations to French slave owners. Haiti is unable to pay off this debt until 1947. Throughout this period the Haitian treasury is bankrupt. This is the single greatest cause of Haiti's historical impoverishment.
- **1915**: 3,000 Marines enter Port-au-Prince to begin the US occupation of Haiti. The occupation lasts for 19 years, until 1934.
- **1957**: Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier is elected President of Haiti. He establishes a totalitarian state, using a private militia called the Tonton Macoute to control the population and eliminate enemies. Papa Doc dies in 1971, and is succeeded by his son Jean-Claude ("Baby Doc") who rules until 1986.
- **1991**: In Haiti's first truly democratic elections, Jean-Bertrand Aristide is elected President with 67.5% of the vote. A Salesian priest, he is known throughout the country for his support of the poor and also his resistance to US control. Two military coups greatly impede his progressive agenda.
- **2010**: A major earthquake destroys much of Port-au-Prince, killing over 200,000 people.
- **2021**: President Jovenal Moïse is assassinated by political opponents. Moïse had refused to hold elections at any level of government; his death leaves the country without a legitimate, elected government.

Here's hoping the next bullet point will be a positive one.

A Message from Dr. Metellus

Hello everyone,

It is my pleasure to talk today about a patient that came to Haiti Communiterie, our new clinic site, for treatment.

Her name is Sara Vilbrun; she is 44 years old. She came to the clinic due to symptoms arising from hypertension. Her blood pressure was, in fact, dangerously high – but she had never before gone



to a doctor for any treatment. Happily, we were able to give her medication that immediately reduced her blood pressure. After that, I made sure that she understood

the damage that this condition could do to her body. She was given some additional tests and medicine and we arranged a follow-up visit so that I could determine whether she had other health issues that were hidden by the effects of the hypertension.

When she returned for the follow-up visit she was extremely joyful and she did not fail to thank Lamp for treatment that she was sure had saved her life.

She had been fearful that she would have to spend her last savings on treatment but had received good, effective care without paying anything.

I advised her that it was important to control her diet, even though it is difficult for her to do so since she has very little income.

The example of Mme. Vilbrun shows that we must educate our patients more concerning the dangers of this disease, the necessity of managing one's diet, and the necessity of seeking medical care before symptoms become serious. Medical care is necessary to prevent complications from arising.

Priorities such as Mme. Vilbrun motivate me to prioritize this education in order to reduce the prevalence of health illness within the low-income communities that we serve. I thank Lamp for giving me the opportunity to provide this care and the tools to do it effectively.

– Dr. Metellus

❖ UPDATE: HAITI! ❖

► The area surrounding the Lamp's health center in Cité Soleil has become even more dangerous, with constant battles between rival gangs. Happily, we have fully renovated our new space, shared with partner agency Haiti Communiterie, and are providing full daily health services there. The new site is in a calm area of the city, but not far from our home community. We can utilize the site as our primary service center as long as we wish. And, since we have this safe space in which to work, we can now consider our return to Bwa Nèf with more equanimity, without exposing our staff to unnecessary risk. We are very lucky to have found this perfect location.



► Education program: It may be surprising to some, but Lamp's education program is continuing in full swing. Due to disruption in many neighborhoods, our sponsored children have spread far and wide, making it much more difficult for us to connect with them, but we have done so. Prices of many



School supplies being assembled

things, and school books in particular, have risen dramatically, so that the cost for

sponsoring a child for a year will now be \$450. Nevertheless, schools remain places of order and achievement where children can escape from the external chaos for a time and concentrate on learning. We are always looking for more sponsors!

❖ GALA UPDATE! ❖

► The Lamp for Haiti Annual Fall Gala and Silent Auction held November 10 at the Woman's Club of Upper Montclair, was a great evening and fundraising success! Thank you to our gala committee, chef Jose Velez, Rebecca Shapiro and volunteers from Montclair High School, volunteers from Seton Hall Division of Volunteer Efforts, the evening's entertainment Vag Twobadou, all our event sponsors, in-kind sponsors, attendees, and everyone who helped make the event terrific! **Thank you!**



Guest speaker Daniel Tillias is the Executive Director of SAKALA, a youth-focused organization in Cité Soleil that promotes peacebuilding, and a member of Lamp's Board of Directors.

Happy Holidays!



How to Help!

Henry Reimer, Executive Director

Opening a new site for health services is a very exciting step, especially given the chaotic environment in Port-au-Prince, but we must admit that our current finances need a boost to carry us through. I think, if you are reading this, that you also want us to succeed. The need for medical services in Port-au-Prince is beyond description – this is not a time to pull back. This note suggests some ways to help.

- **Spread the news about our work!** Lamp is doing something very special, very much worthy of support. We are providing medical care to the poorest of the poor in a very desperate time. Invite new people to the Lamp website, Facebook, Instagram, and events. Consider who might find our work compelling.
- **Hold a fundraiser** at your home, school, workplace. Lamp has been the proud beneficiary of many supporter-led fundraisers and we will be happy to give you ideas, provide materials and support. Contact Kelli at kelli@lampforhaiti.org or myself at henryreimer@lampforhaiti.org
- **Participate in Lamp events.** For example, we want this year's Run for Haiti 5K to be a ground-shaker! It will be held in Branchbrook Park, Newark, NJ on April 28th. Check our website, FB, and IG for upcoming details. See you there!
- **Find items that we can sell** in our annual silent auction (starting October 1st).
- **If you happen to be in the medical field**, note that we are often looking for specific equipment. At the moment, for example, we are hoping to find a microscope for our laboratory, and a second portable ultra-sound. Our existing ultra-sound machine was a gift from a local hospital and we have made extremely productive use of it! Remember, though, that our goal is to provide top quality care; we are not looking for equipment that is past its expiry date!
- **Use iGive for this year's holiday shopping.** iGive is a very proactive service, constantly adding new stores to its list of donors. When you shop using iGive, the price of the item you buy remains the same, but the store donates an agreed-upon percentage to the charity of your choice. Choose Lamp for Haiti! Go to www.iGive.com to get started.
- **Volunteer! Lamp has a wonderful group of volunteers** – you will feel right at home. Most Lamp events are in the Montclair, NJ, area but check to see if we have virtual opportunities.
- **And, of course, keep supporting the work.** Your donations are hugely valued!
- **Take care, be proud, and keep smiling!**

