

**The Haitian Project, Inc.
Community Update: The Drain Remains
November 7, 2012**



Above are before and after pictures, from student to doctor, of Theony Deshommes (LCS '02) and Nelly Drouinaud (LCS '05). To become a doctor in Haiti, it takes six years of academic courses followed by an internship (medical rotations) at a specific hospital. After the internship year, students must complete a year of government-mandated social service in order to receive a license to practice medicine in Haiti. In total, it takes a minimum of fifteen years to turn an incoming LCS student into a fully licensed medical doctor.

Before delving into this difficult subject, I want to make a few points for clarification...

90% of our Louverture Cleary School graduates are in Haiti working, going to university in Haiti or studying abroad with the intent of returning to Haiti.

The right to migrate to work is an important right of the highest order as it is integral to the right to life.

Personally, I hope and pray for the orderly and legal elimination of the borders separating the countries of the Western Hemisphere. This would only produce a stronger region. John Paul the Great made this point in his exhortation titled *The Church in America*.

That said, I would like to relate two recent experiences:

Just days before heading to Brown University last week, I received one of our recent medical school graduates at LCS. He has just finished his internship year and is preparing for his year of social service, which is a requirement for being licensed in Haiti. I watched this nearly thirty year old man, a completely formed doctor who has served his country (even before emerging completely from medical school) during the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake and a cholera epidemic, candidly state to the student body that he had to borrow the equivalent of 50 cents from his mother to afford a tap-tap (public transportation) to the school.

Shortly after that encounter, I was informed that another one of our LCS graduates, who was refused employment at a partner clinic that is staffed by Chilean and U.S. volunteer doctors, had given up trying to find medical employment in Haiti and was in the United States. Ironically, his medical training was in the Dominican Republic and he is fluent in Spanish.

Along with these anecdotal comments, we have the following recent statistics about the medical situation in Haiti. There are two doctors in Haiti for every 10,000 people. The global average is 13 doctors per 10,000 people—24 in the United States.

It is true that some of our LCS graduates are finding it difficult to make their way professionally in Haiti. This is especially true for medical professionals. To date, there are 40 LCS graduates -- 10% of our living graduates -- involved in the field of medicine. We have 8 in nursing, 2 graduated. We have 20 LCS graduates in medical school and 4 completing internships. We have eight graduates who have completed their medical studies and internships. Of the 8 LCS doctors, 3 are in the US. One of our nurses is also in the U.S. This means 40% of completed graduates in this field have expatriated. However, this is a small sampling and we expect a positive change in this area as more graduates emerge.

Several difficulties play into the current situation. For one, our graduates are not from established medical families. It is difficult for them to embark on their own private practice-- something sorely needed in Haiti. One of the reasons we helped launch Economic Growth Initiative for Haiti (EGI), a program that teaches business management with an eye toward business creation, is to help doctors learn how to start and operate their own practices.

The second contributing factor is access to working abroad. The world, especially the developed world, attracts doctors and nurses with higher pay, better equipment and stability. Unfortunately, one of the negatives of global medicine and the high levels of International Non-Governmental Organizations operating in poor countries is expatriation of medical professionals.

It takes a lot of discipline to turn down offers to expatriate, but I know our graduates have the necessary commitment to make the sacrifice—if they can find work and help getting started.

While we are concerned about the difficulty of getting LCS medical professionals situated in Haiti, we are pleased that we are doing much better than the national results. A few months ago, an in-depth article appeared in Haiti's national paper on the subject of the expatriation of medical professionals. It reported that 62.9% of state university graduates emigrate to the United States. 30% of graduates from private universities follow suit. Of Haitian medical students who train in Cuba, 77% are currently unemployed.

While the frustration caused by the current lack of institutional structure in Haiti is inescapable it is not insurmountable. It does not in any way dampen my firm belief that Louverture Cleary's success is fueled both by God's assistance and the youthful spirit of our graduates. I'm confident that the constant formation of young, committed, dynamic leadership for Haiti will result in systemic change in all sectors. We've already had great success in the private business sector. I'm sure we'll soon start seeing that success in the medical field as well. This campaign for Institutional Growth in Haiti would, of course, be greatly aided if the international support coming to Haiti were focused towards helping the government gaining the capacity and competency to build all types of systems, one of which would be a health system.

Peace, Patrick

--

To make a donation or to read recently posted community updates go to www.haitianproject.org

Elizabeth Cross

Director of Community Development
The Haitian Project, Inc.
(815) 505-1287

P.O. Box 6891
Providence, RI 02940

“What you receive as gift, you must give as gift.”
“Se gratis nou resevwa, Se gratis tou pou nou bay.”

---Matthew 10:8