

Occasional Paper N° 23

Bryant C. Freeman, Ph.D.
Series Editor

Michelle Etnire

*HAITI:
The Orphan Chronicles*



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Occasional Papers
Bryant C. Freeman, Ph.D. - Series Editor

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HAITI: THE ORPHAN CHRONICLES

This is the continuation of a series of documents concerning Haiti made available through the University of Kansas Institute of Haitian Studies. The present study is divided into two main sections: Part I is an overview of eight representative Haitian orphanages, chosen from the twelve or thirteen visited by the author. Only one is in Port-au-Prince, three are in the mountains above Port-au-Prince in the general area of Kenscoff* and Fermathe,* one on the road to Jacmel,* one in the North at Limbé* not far from Cap-Haitian,* and two near the end of the long southern peninsula at Jérémie.* Four are Catholic, three Protestant, and one non-denominational. All are for both boys and girls, except for the Foyer Sainte-Famille which is for girls only. Part II consists of biographical accounts of twenty-four boys at Saint Joseph's Home for Boys, located in lower Pétion-Ville,* off of Delmas* 91, founded and directed by Michael Geilenfeld. Each of the boys recounts in his own words his life story and how he arrived at St. Joseph's - a sobering slice of Haitian life. Naturally the boys' names have been changed here to respect their privacy.

The study was conducted in Haiti over a period of two months by Michelle Etnire, a recent graduate of the University of Kansas Haitian Studies program. She has studied and traveled widely in Haiti during the course of several extended stays, is fluent in the Haitian language, and is the compiler of the recent "Detailed Index to Heinl, Heinl and Heinl, *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People, 1492-1995*" (University of Kansas Institute of Haitian Studies Occasional Paper N° 21). She is soon to begin a two-year program with the U.S. Peace Corps in Haiti. For the present report, one month was spent visiting the various orphanages described in Part I, and the second month at St. Joseph's. Names and locations were furnished by the Haitian Children's Bureau in Port-au-Prince, local Catholic churches, neighboring orphanages, or even by a helpful taxi driver. She received a friendly welcome everywhere, but getting to the various places sometimes required real endurance. Taptaps* were her main mode of transportation, involving long waits in the sun, crowding in with the goats and chickens, and the inevitable stops for repairing the inevitable flat tires. For the Fermathe*-Kenscoff* area she took taptaps, but then sometimes had to hike for 30 minutes or more up the mountain. For Decouzer* she took the Jacmel* taptap and for Limbé* the Cap-Haitian* taptap, but the long twelve-hour trip to Jérémie* and twelve hours back, on a dusty, bumpy bus, especially over the notoriously bad stretch between Cayes* and Jérémie, was the most trying of all. And once arrived, the back of a motorcycle taxi had to suffice for local transportation. Finally, for one interview [see Iv, pages 31-33] she had to gain entrance to the forbidding National Penitentiary in downtown Port-au-Prince - though unlike U.S. penitentiary visits there was no body search and no glass wall separator. Through all this her dedication to Haiti and to Haitians never faltered.

* * * * *

The real subject of Part II is a very simple one: how did these orphaned or abandoned children arrive at their present home? What are their individual life stories? What, collectively, is their life story?

When reading these seemingly prosaic accounts, one must use one's imagination, and one's heart. The full extent of a statement such as: "They had to put us out on the street with no place to go and no money or clothes," [Salnav, page 20] must be interpreted in the mind's eye along with a myriad of heart-rending details. The boys are not eloquent. Each states his truth simply, usually devoid of details. It is up to the reader to visualize the details. Read without imagination, the accounts can be seemingly flat and meaningless. Read with imagination, they portray the very fabric of much of Haitian life today. The boys present their straightforward facts; the reader must interpret them.

The central narrative is constituted by a simple linear account of the lives of twenty-four boys who had the singular - some would say the colossal - good fortune of being taken off the hard streets and alleys of contemporary Haiti and finding a home in what is essentially a sacred refuge called St. Joseph's Home for Boys. It is not an orphanage, since an orphanage normally seeks to place its children in foster homes. Many of these boys have already been in what amounts to foster homes. But through the grace of God, and the compassion of Michael Geilenfeld, they have found a home here.

* * * * *

In 1995, while serving as an advisor for the United Nations in Haiti, my official quarters were not going to be ready for two days, so I decided to stay at St. Joseph's, which is supported in part by paying guests. I thought I could put up with anything for two days, and would be able or not to recommend it to my students. And for my full six-month tour of duty I never moved out. Seldom had I had the privilege of living in such a warm, welcoming community, and of experiencing so directly the potential of Haiti. Its routine is quite simple. Except for a lady who comes in twice a week to do the laundry, all the work is done by the boys. Each has his assigned tasks, instilling a sense of responsibility and commitment. There is no running water, only large cylinders which the boys refill, but cleanliness and cheerfulness characterize the Home. Best of all, each evening there is a house meeting in which all participate. Any of the day's misunderstandings are ironed out, and special praise is given for any boy who has performed extra chores. Michael delivers a short fatherly talk - amazingly different each evening and truly inspired - and ending with prayers and a song, while all join hands. I often wonder how many children raised in their own family benefit from such daily quality time.

Bryant C. Freeman
("Tonton Liben")

*Terms marked by an asterisk are explained in a Glossary at the end by the Series editor.

HAITI: THE ORPHAN CHRONICLES

This is not the story of the woefully inadequate Third-World country called Haiti. This is the story of children. This is the story of children who survive in the middle of a bad situation whose setting could be anywhere. The population of orphaned children— orphaned through death, poverty, murder, and a myriad of other obstacles—is one that needs to be addressed indeed. Haiti has the means of coping with these abandoned children thanks to the cooperation of many people and many countries. This paper researches a few of the orphanages throughout the country. It also introduces a more intimate relationship with these children. After the introductory piece involving descriptions of various orphanages, there is a section which give the biographies of the children of a particular home for orphans. The children tell their stories in first-hand accounts. Their stories introduce a new light in that the context of orphans is far more complex than may be realized. These children from St. Joseph's Home for Boys share their side of the story, a story of the 'Third World' that goes far too unnoticed. It is the hope of this writer that the children's stories cast a more positive light on the rather dark perception current in the Western world. These children have overcome extreme odds and have emerged victorious. Haiti is definitely a poverty-stricken place, but there is hope—and this is what these children share. All of the orphanages written about in this paper exist today and can be visited. Many are in need of monetary and physical aid. Some are directed by foreign countries and persons, some are Haitian run. There are many differences and many similarities, but the main message remains the same: children cannot be ignored. With love and compassion these children can perhaps go on to contribute to the betterment of Haiti.

PART I: OVERVIEW OF EIGHT REPRESENTATIVE HAITIAN ORPHANAGES

La Maison l'Arc-en-Ciel (The Rainbow House)

“Accorde-moi ton amitié et j'affronterai vents et marées”
 (“Give me your friendship and I will stand up against winds and tides”)

This little orphanage in the mountains above Fermathe does indeed cast a spell upon the visitor as does a sky-lit rainbow. The president and general director, Danielle Reed Pénette, is from Quebec, Canada. She and her Haitian spouse began this beautiful project in 1996. The major difference between this and the many other orphanages scattered throughout the country is that this rainbow-enlightened venture is home to HIV-infected children. This house formerly owned by the Duvaliers is now owned by the current Haitian government. The government, however, is charging no rent for the first five years in order that the Pénettes continue their work.

This beautiful house is painted in all the colors of the rainbow. The furniture, paintings, and toys are designed to fit the size and attract the eye of the children. Everything is designed for the delight of, and on a scale suited to, the children. The orphanage receives aid from many countries, including Canada, Germany, and the U.S. They usually depend on word-of-mouth as a means of publicity and fund-raising. The Rainbow House hopes to be on the Internet soon. They send letters to many organizations, but, like similar non-profit institutions, the need is greater than the response. Those things required most urgently are HIV/AIDS medications. In 2001, the orphanage must begin to pay rent on the state-owned home, contributing to future budget problems. Although the Rainbow House does have a need for outside donations, the orphanage continues to operate effectively. The following is a detailed description of the manner in which it is run.

There are twenty-seven children in the orphanage. A few are not HIV-positive. These children serve to show how easy it is for HIV-positive and negative children to live harmoniously. They are the siblings of the ill children who have no place else to go. The children must be from poor areas, mainly from the city of Port-au-Prince. Each must be an orphan, or at least with one parent dead, missing or indigent. They accept children between the ages of two and six. If the condition of a child under the age of two is very bad, without parents or support, then the Rainbow House will accept them without hesitation. The orphanage is responsible for everything ranging from food and schooling, to death arrangements. Its school is operated according to the Montessori method. There have been a few problems with former teachers being too morbid, with thoughts such as, "Why teach the kids when they are bound to die anyway?" After those experiences the directors have conducted a major campaign to recruit teachers more gentle and positive. Some of the kids do go outside the home for school in the community. This helps foster the Rainbow House belief that HIV-positive children are not to be shunned, but embraced. When the children go to school with the neighboring children, the idea is that the people will become more familiar with the sickness, and less shame and animosity will result. Of course there are children who are too small, too sick, too developmentally delayed for school. These children are treated with the needed care until one day when perhaps they too can go to school.

All of the above children are called the 'internals.' There are other children connected with the house who are called 'externals' because they do not live within the house. These externals number up to fifty children. They range in age from two to ten years. They come from very poor areas of greater Port-au-Prince, the majority from between Carrefour and Croix-des-Missions. The children must have lost at least one parent. The parent might be dead, absent, or indisposed, which are the same criteria for the internals. Twenty of these externals are HIV-positive. Thirty are healthy in that sense. The Rainbow House helps all the children in the household of the HIV-infected child. Their belief is that all the siblings of a particular sick child are affected by the disease: its shame, its ridicule, and its burden.

It is difficult to find these sick children within the city. They are usually referred by hospitals and other orphanages. The families often do not disclose this information due to the stigma and ill-repute the disease inflicts when ignorance abounds. A family will be somewhat ostracized if

neighbors are unable to accept the disease in the neighborhood. Therefore, more often than not, families will hide the disease if and when it is detected.

When the children are located by the Rainbow House, good things begin to happen. Social workers and nurses, employed by the orphanage on a twenty-four hour basis, visit each house regularly. The sick children, along with their sisters and brothers, are put in school, given medication, food, and clothes. The external children come every month to play with the internal children. The social workers' and nurses' jobs also include checking to see how the entire family is coping and cooperating: if the children are given the medicine, being fed regularly, and going to school. The workers check for mental as well as physical well-being. The mothers, if any, of the externals and internals come to the orphanage once a month to meet with other mothers who share the same situations. The mothers also use this time for socializing and relaxing. The nurses and social workers also hold workshops on health care and nutrition. The idea is to incorporate the "streets" of Port-au-Prince—those "streets" which seem so inaccessible and remote—into a larger community of HIV-infected and affected individuals and families. The goal is to create a support-system, a family in which members can rely on each other emotionally. The orphanage itself is too new to be able to see if what is supposed to work actually works. It is, however, a great beginning with great expectations.

Fondation Sœurs Rédemptrices de Nazareth (Foundation of the Redemptrice Sisters of Nazareth)

This Catholic orphanage, directed by Sr. Donna P. Bélizaire, stands high in the town of Kenscoff, a mountain district above Port-au-Prince. Although Sr. Donna was not present when I visited, there was another sister who gladly showed me around. Sr. Donna mostly resides abroad in order to raise funds for operations such as this orphanage. The sisters who work with Sr. Donna are from Belgium, Canada and the United States. The following is a general sketch of this little mountain orphanage.

There are currently 115 boys and girls. There seems to be no limit on the acceptance policy because they always accept more children. But they must be between the ages of one month and fourteen years when accepted. The children come here for obvious reasons. Perhaps their parents are dead, missing, mentally ill, or too poor to care for them any longer. During their years in residence the children go to the school inside the orphanage complex itself. The sisters employ four teachers. Though raised in the Catholic tradition, the children go to a Baptist mission for medical visits. The children have the possibility of adoption; Sr. Donna works with this aspect when she is abroad. Although this is rare, it occasionally happens, and a child might come to live in the U.S., Canada or Belgium. When the children reach eighteen years of age, they must leave. The sisters state that they always try to help those leaving find employment, housing and security.

The children will sing a song of welcome when visitors arrive, which is a frequent occurrence. The orphanage seems a bit small to house such a large number of children, but the children are

lovely and proud. If visiting, it is best to go during lunch time. It is a joy to see the kids gulp down their rice. Some of the orphans include children so little that after you feed them, they will curl up in your arms so as to be held during their nap. It is both heart-breaking and heart-opening.

Foyer Sainte-Famille (Home of the Holy Family)

This Catholic orphanage, on the Delmas road of Port-au-Prince, is directed by several nuns. It is an orphanage for girls only. Begun by Simone Duvalier in 1958, it had originally been called the Simone Ovide Duvalier Orphanage For Girls (English translation). The support came from the Duvalier family until they fled Haiti in 1986. The nuns stayed, but the name and the support did not. This pleasant home continues to receive a small, random contribution from the current government, having begun with official governmental support. The state allowance, however, is not enough, and the sisters must seek outside help. They claim that no specific organization donates anything. Instead, the sisters have formed a small community in the Catholic dioceses where they receive funds. Individually, countries such as Brazil, Belgium, Canada, the United States, as well as Haiti, maintain the support needed by the Foyer Sainte-Famille.

Sisters Emma and Sédalia are among the four nuns who work there. The orphanage currently houses sixty girls, with the capacity of one hundred. The children are mainly sent from the Sèvis Byen Sosyal or the Children's Services. The girls are also referred by hospitals, concerned neighbors, or they simply appear at the doorstep.

The children can enter at the minimum age of three and must leave by eighteen. The sisters, with their connections, help the girls find employment, housing and a good start in life. The sisters send the children to school outside of the orphanage beginning at the kindergarten level. They do not maintain a school, not because of a lack of funds, but due to a strong belief that these girls must have contact with other children and other levels of existence. After school, however, the orphanage does offer classes in dance, art, and cooking. Volunteers are encouraged to visit. Many do, mostly Swiss and Spanish. A priest comes every Sunday to say Mass for the girls.

The dormitories contain ten rooms with space for ten children in each. There are Haitian women who sleep in the same room with the girls. They cannot be married or have their own children. Their job is the ten girls with whom they share a room. The orphanage is their home. They act as mother figures, dispensing advice, giving cooking and cleaning lessons and expertly loving the children. This system seems to work well, as other orphanages employ similar "mother" mechanisms.

This fairly large orphanage contains a spacious outside play area, roomy sleeping quarters, and many sitting rooms with beautiful Haitian art. When offered orphaned boys, the sisters do not simply turn them away. They persistently search localities for the little boys to live. The sisters treat those abandoned boys with as much concern as that received by the girls. When visitors appear, the sisters are warm and eager to show what their work is all about: children. Because

of all of this, it is indeed a pleasure to see those enchanting little girls on the right path to becoming exemplary young women.

Orphelinat du Projet Bon Secours de Decouzer (Orphanage of Good Help of Decouzer)

Begun in 1992 by the now deceased wife of Wilfred Félix, this orphanage is rare in that it is completely Haitian run, operated, and financed. Its handsome residence is located on the Route de l'Amitié, not far from the southern town of Jacmel. The founder, Madam Félix, was very sick and could not move around easily. Originally from Port-au-Prince, she and her husband decided to move to the mountains near Jacmel. There the environment and clean air were better for her health. Her love of children gave her the idea of beginning this small undertaking. As the size of the orphanage project and the number of children grew, Madam Félix's health began to decline. When she passed away after a few years, her husband, Wilfred, did not abandon her project. Instead he invested more capital to insure its continuation. Now in 1999, seven years later, the orphanage continues to thrive.

There are eighty children who call Decouzer home. They come mainly from the southern countryside, near the towns of Jacmel, Cayes, and Jérémie. Decouzer accepts any child regardless of age. Wilfred does not have any contact with the Children's Services in the capital. He claims that because the orphanage is in the country, many people know of its existence. This might explain the arrival of children from as far away as Jérémie. Wilfred and his assistants run a school that serves approximately 400 children from the community as well as everyone in the orphanage. Elementary school is free, but the community at large must pay for the high school. There are eleven teachers and one general director. Haitian is the language of instruction in the primary school, and French is used at the secondary level. The school is spacious, with many rooms equipped with chalk boards, benches, and desks. The director's office has an ample supply of books in Haitian, French, and English. The children also receive a free lunch.

When asked how one person could afford such ambitious goals, Wilfred admitted that money problems arise every week. He has a private income which he invests in support of the orphanage, but that income is slowly becoming inadequate. He receives a little aid of rice and flour from a U.S. organization called BNG. This food is good, but the children cannot eat just rice and bread every day. He must pay for school, daily food, clothing and other needs of the children. He must pay for the doctor who comes once a month. He must pay for the nine people who cook, clean, and wash for the orphanage. He must pay for the three persons who care for the babies and small children. The physical upkeep of the school takes a large percentage of the budget as well. The financial situation is ever so tight.

When one wants to help a 'Third-World' country like Haiti, difficulties arise concerning just how to help. An orphanage like Decouzer is simply a wonderful place to begin. Wilfred is not only at one with the children and employees at the orphanage, but with the surrounding community as well. In this community, Wilfred is the *gwo nèg*, which translates as the big man, the man (or family) with all the money. Sometimes that "big man" becomes coolly detached from the

neighbors—but not in this case. Wilfred invites his neighbors every Sunday for drinks, snacks, and conversation. When I was there, this typical afternoon stretched into the evening. Perhaps Wilfred has money, but he shares so much of it that he basically has none. He is grounded in his calling to help the children of his country. In an appeal for humanity, Wilfred's voice is among the most clear. Orphanages such as these, entirely Haitian, define the essential model for the 'developing world.' If one goes to visit Decouzer, take a step back and ponder that this is textbook theory. This is ground-breaking progress that exists for the Haitian people by the Haitian people.

Christian Haitian Outreach

This "outreach" program is actually a Protestant orphanage run by an off-location missionary. In her place, a Haitian married couple act as directors. The orphanage is located on the southern peninsula, in Jérémie.

The orphanage calls itself an outreach program in that it stresses the Protestant religion. I was not there for more than five minutes before the acting directors stated their negative feelings concerning the indigenous religion of Haiti—Voodoo—and then stated their praise for the Christian Haitian Outreach's religion, Protestantism. The orphanage is supported through various U.S. Protestant churches. The general director visits churches in the U.S. for donations. She comes to Jérémie approximately once every two months in order to oversee the organization and settle any problems, as well as to review the financial situation.

There are sixty-five children, with ages ranging from babies to twenty-one year olds. There is a hospital in Jérémie that refers the majority of orphaned children there, but occasionally a neighbor or family member will bring the children, too. The directing couple claims to have no space limitation, and is always available to accept more children. The grade school is within the mission, but the children attend a local school for secondary education. At the time of my visit, there was construction on a new church inside the enclosure which the children will attend each Sunday. After school and on the weekends the children have classes in cooking, cleaning, gardening, laundry, and other domestic skills. There are twenty-five people who work there to cook, clean, wash, and care for the little children. The children can be adopted through certain U.S. Protestant churches. If not, however, the outreach will help the children find employment and housing when they leave, which is around the age of twenty-one. When I visited, the children were either playing, watching television, or cooking. All seemed bashful, with the quintessential charm only children can offer.

Vive Jésus Vivant l'Évangile de Grâce (Long Live the Living Jesus of the Evangel of Grace)

The second main orphanage in Jérémie is Protestant as well, though with a completely different atmosphere. When I first entered, the smell of drying coffee beans wafted through my nose, a child playing a musical instrument rang through my ears. The director, Alexandra Yvose and her husband, run this orphanage basically by themselves. Through the couple's and the children's personal efforts and incomes, along with two Protestant churches in the U.S., this little home for children has been able to sustain itself for many years.

The history of Vive Jésus Vivant is quite interesting. Yvose had been working for an American Protestant man who began this orphanage. After he died, Yvose continued his work. She had only two small churches with which she was connected, but those churches have remained steady and generous. Her husband works as a long-distance bus driver. She has a gardening field outside of town where she and the children go every day after school and during vacation. The food they grow, they eat. The coffee they grow, they sell. Thus the coffee beans drying inside the house account for such a fragrant reception. There is no money to hire servants. The couple and the children do all the chores: cooking, cleaning, and washing. But, the two churches, in Georgia and Ohio, donate time as well as money. Recently one of the congregations built a solid new kitchen for the orphanage.

During the 1992-93 embargo,* this orphanage felt its impact. During a community upheaval, the house was destroyed by arson. Due to feuding neighbors and political differences, Yvose took her children to the countryside. There they slept outdoors and became very thin. When the group returned, the then U.S. Ambassador Alvin Adams came to visit. He had heard that the orphanage was indeed a worthwhile endeavor, and he wanted to pay his respects. When he visited, with the encouragement of a local organization, the children gave him a short musical concert.

The children receive not only a scholastic education but a musical one as well. Music is very important here, and every child has the opportunity to learn an instrument. The horns, flutes, drums, synthesizers, tambourines, and many other types of instruments have been donated by various people or bought by the orphanage itself. Because Yvose has a musical background, she is able to instruct the children in music. There is also an older girl who, having returned from music school, also teaches the younger ones.

Yvose has a passion for the children. She boasted of a child she personally had stolen from an insane family member. She looked at that child with a sense of calm now that he was safe in her home where no one would beat or starve him. She refers to these children as her own. She does not allow adoption because in her words, "How can you sell your own children? How do you know if the child is safe, so far away?" Thus, she invests all of her being into her family. She admits her biggest dream for the children involves food and education: always having enough of both.

Because of this dream, she can no longer accept any more children. The house is too full. A few years ago, the group had to build a small, separate housing structure for the boys because the house proper had become too crowded. The orphanage does not have the financial resources to accept more children and at the same time to continue its current involvement in each child's life. For example, she does not just want the child to play an instrument, she wants the child to play it well. For my farewell, the children played "The Saints Go Marching In." The children were so proud. The two little girls, one playing the cymbals, the other playing the bass drum, were proof that a little investment and a little attention can take a scared orphan and turn him or her into a unique and proud child.

Hôpital Le Bon Samaritain (Hospital of the Good Samaritan)

Within this missionary hospital in Limbé, begun in 1953 by the Hodges family, lies an orphan and handicapped ward which has existed for some time, but without a much-needed physical therapy center. A Swiss physical therapist named Sibyll Hoch who, volunteering her time and expertise, began working with these children who previously had not been thought of as worth the trouble. A new center was built with padded floors for more comfortable exercise. The therapist was given two assistants for her to teach so they could carry on with her work after she leaves. Each day that Sibyll worked she would bring the children, totally without parents, into the work area. There she would help bed-ridden children to sit, sitting children to stand, standing children to walk, and walking children to run and dance and twirl. The current director of the hospital, Joanna Hodges, widow of the late Dr. William H. Hodges, has called Sibyll their "miracle worker." The children, however severe their physical disability, now have something to look forward to each day: intimate attention and tangible physical improvement.

Across the way, another room abounds with life: the orphan ward. These children come from the maternity ward where mothers deliver and abandon, or the children are simply brought here due to tragic circumstances. The hospital had never had so many babies at one time as when I visited. The number was sixteen and growing. There are three women who care for the children twenty-four hours a day. Some of these children are more or less healthy, but others are quite ill. Common health problems are meningitis, pneumonia and tuberculosis. If the illness causes delayed development, the physical therapy room is available for recourse. The hospital does not know the future of these babies and toddlers. Usually after one year, the orphaned babies are sent to another orphanage or family. However, due to the large amount of orphans, the hospital does not know if homes can be found for all. Therefore the orphan room is in a state of flux. It is uncertain what will come of this, but decisions must be made because the babies and toddlers will grow into children who will need education and a more secure future. If one maintains a mission hospital, then the children must feel secure in the knowledge that the mission will not abandon them. It is, and should be, a great concern for the Hôpital Bon Samaritain. In a poor country or in a rich country, a child is still a child—with a presence that is invaluable, a future both fragile and important.

The hospital does not ignore the reality of the situation. A separate kitchen for the handicapped and orphaned children has been established with its own cooks serving meals three times a day. The hospital, in a good samaritan manner, accepts the abandoned children regardless of their condition. When there is a specialist such as Sibyll Hoch, things seem to operate well. But the concern remains. What will happen with the physically disabled children when Sibyll leaves? Will her assistants continue the service? Will the hospital campaign for more volunteers with similar qualifications? These are questions that the staff at Bon Samaritain are contemplating. Let us wish them the resources to be able to respond, in the name of the children.

Nos Petits Frères et Sœurs (Our Little Brothers and Sisters)

This organization was begun in Mexico by a former orphan who had had a good experience in his particular orphanage. He left Mexico with the dream of beginning many others in many other countries. Thus he organized in the general Kenscoff area Our Little Brothers and Sisters, similar to ones in Mexico, Honduras, and Nicaragua. Typical of this organization, the one in Haiti is in itself a very large compound with its own school, playground, performance stage, dormitories, and cemetery. The dormitories are separated according to sex, but education and other activities are not. The following description applies to the orphanages in the other countries as well, with only slight modifications.

Each houses approximately 450-500 children of all ages. They usually leave at the age of seventeen or eighteen. There is a large school which includes both primary and secondary levels. The children are accepted upon consent of an admissions board made up of employees and directors of the orphanage. They check to see if the child meets the requirements: the child has no family, or the family is unable to properly care for the child. The admissions board does not usually take children over thirteen, but will do so if they have little brothers and sisters who need to gain acceptance. Every child has a sponsor thanks to a special program located in Canada, the United States, and many European countries. In addition every child has a sponsor or partial sponsor who helps fund the orphanage itself. For example, some sponsors send birthday gifts or money for the children, but not all. So they collect all the birthday money and gifts and divide everything equally so every child receives a gift on his or her birthday. If a birthday is unknown, one is invented based upon medical opinion. There is no adoption. Upon departure from the orphanage, there is a financial program to help the young adults make their way in the world beyond the orphanage. There are business contacts which offer work experience and possible future employment. In the children's last year at the orphanage they go and work in many types of jobs such as a hair salon, a shoe shop, an automotive garage, or a cigarette factory.

The orphanage encourages volunteers. This is a somewhat complex process. Applicants come for one full year or, just recently inaugurated, a summer program of three months. They favor applicants having some skills in child care, carpentry, education, etc. But the board of directors is quite flexible. Volunteers receive room and board and a small stipend, working for eleven days followed by a three-day break.

A special feature here is a center for handicapped children directed by two foreigners, aided by a few Haitian women. There are nineteen children, but two of whom are able to live with the other children. A typical day for the children here: They wake and dress. They receive therapy and massage. Then there is group work which includes developing and stimulating the senses—touching, hearing, smelling, tasting and seeing. After lunch, the children participate in arts and crafts, followed by supervised clean-up. There is a Montessori school nearby that five of the children attend, the only ones in the orphanage to go outside the compound for classes.

This organization also directs a small children's hospital in Pétion-Ville called Hôpital Saint-Damien. It is designed for the poor, each client paying only five gourdes (33¢). All the children from the Kenscoff orphanage receive their medical care here. The beauty of this hospital is its two Haitian women social workers/nurses. The women are enthusiastic and positive. They enjoy their job, as several interviewees confirmed. A main component of their job revolves around health education. They talk with the visiting families of the sick children every day to discuss preventive medicine and health care in general. It is their hope that the children will not regress in their particular illness, and that the mothers can prevent other illnesses from occurring in their present and future children. But in a poor country where mothers do not have the money to buy expensive nutritious foods, where the water especially in Port-au-Prince is dirty, and where it is too expensive to buy charcoal to boil the dirty water, the cycle of sick children, especially in the capital, will continue. Bring the child for care, listen to the ladies talk, but with the knowledge that there is little means of ending a sick child's pain. Herein lies the problem with impoverished countries like Haiti. Good works, good hospitals *are* inherently good, but they are not a solution. In the midst of popular 'Third-World politics,' there are so many theories and counter-theories that hospitals like Saint-Damien might forever be imprisoned within the poverty cycle because the paradigms of 'Third-World development' have trouble in defining their orientation.

The hospital does have a specific method for handling abandoned children. Each mother or father must furnish a description, handwritten or oral, which attempts to provide a record of the child's family in case of need to contact, or if the child is abandoned. Information requested includes address and description of the child's home, neighborhood, and relatives' homes. They ask the number of visits per week that a family member can make while the child is in the hospital. Thus, when a child is abandoned, the two nurses/social workers look for the child's home and/or visit other family members seeking information. The women do this for weeks or even months before surrendering the child to Social Services. This is a sad affair, just as in the United States, because no one really knows whether the child is better off in an orphanage or in his/her own home. When there is no choice, however, and the child must go into orphanage care, one can only hope the available orphanage is worthy of that child.

PART II: ST. JOSEPH'S HOME FOR BOYS

St. Joseph's is a home for orphaned boys in Pétion-Ville, a suburb of Port-au-Prince. Michael Geilenfeld, the founder and director, has his roots in the Catholic church, which paved the way for him to begin this home for street children. Michael spent two years at a Franciscan House of Studies in Detroit, Michigan. Later, he joined the Missionary Brothers of Charity, founded by Mother Theresa of Calcutta. Michael was a member of that congregation for eleven years, serving in Vietnam, Cambodia, India, California, and Haiti. In 1984, as the Director of Novices, he trained new Brothers in the life of the Missionaries of Charity. That year, an idea came to Michael during one of his moments of prayer. The idea was to go beyond the nightly shelter services offered by the Brothers to street children. He wanted to create a family setting for the boys. However when Michael presented the idea to his superiors, he was told that what he was asking for was not feasible within the Brothers' current structure. If he wanted to follow this dream, he would have to leave the Brothers of Charity and pursue the idea on his own. Because leaving the Brothers was such a big step, Michael requested a leave of absence to decide on his future. Through prayer and the help of spiritual advisors, Michael made the decision to resign from the order and build his dream into a reality.

He returned to Port-au-Prince and brought together five boys from the streets to begin his new-found mission. The first home for Michael and his new young family was a small unfurnished four-room house hidden behind a cardboard factory. The only items that Michael could afford were some pots and pans and six woven reed mats. These mats served as chairs during the day and beds at night. On their first morning together, Michael, Djim, Jak, Frans, Chal and Dèlva were gathered for breakfast. Ten minutes into that breakfast there was a knock on the front door. When Michael opened the door, he was surprised to see two American men standing before him. The two men were journalists from a newspaper in Iowa. "We heard that something was being started here and we would like to write an article about it," the men told him. Michael viewed the visit to his small new home as a sign of encouragement and affirmation. He felt his prayers had been heard. Now they thought that God knew where they were and what they were trying to accomplish hidden away behind the cardboard factory. The group ceased to be afraid, because things would be all right.

Thanks to the article by the two journalists, contributions began to come in, and the family began to increase its members. Since 1985, St. Joseph's Home for Boys has become a family to over 140 street children. It has grown tremendously since the group was founded in that little four-room home. To support itself, the orphanage became a guest house for travelers with a daily fee which includes breakfast, supper, and laundry. The importance given visitors is evidenced by the way guests are greeted. One by one, the boys file out with flowers and hugs, singing:

*This is the day, this is the day,
This is the day that the Lord has made.*

Not long ago, Michael and the boys decided to buy a dilapidated orphanage for handicapped children in a small village in the mountains above the capital called Fermathe. This additional

home would prove to be a blessing because of its most charming and precious children. Originally the children were not cared for very well, and the boys wanted to do something. St. Joseph's took over responsibility for helping the sick children become healthy and happy. The handicapped children learned what the world was like outside their beds. Thus, the name changed to *Zèl Lespwa*, i.e., Wings of Hope. This second home also houses orphaned boys who are too young to stay at St. Joseph's. It is currently under further construction so as to add a guest house for volunteers who would like to work with the handicapped children in areas such as physical and mental education.

The following section consists of biographies of past and present children who have stayed or who currently stay at St. Joseph's or at Wings of Hope. All the names have been changed to protect identities. It is hoped that the reader will gain a deeper understanding of the lives of street children especially in one particular poor country, Haiti. These stories are told using the first-person pronoun, as told to me. Because two-thirds of the world live in 'Third-World' conditions, these children are representative of an ever increasingly large percentage of the world's population. Please think about this as the following is read. The beauty of these stories is that they are the lives of children whose innocent instinct for survival in this chaotic world is something both boldly powerful and completely sobering.

Salnav

I was born and have always lived in Port-au-Prince, in the neighborhood called Carrefour-Feuilles.* On the night of 30th of September 1991 [date of the coup d'état* that overthrew President Jean-Bertrand Aristide], we went to church. When we were coming back home, the neighbors told us, "Don't go to your house!" So they took us in and hid us. The *zenglendo** soldiers, they are like the Tonton Macoutes,* broke into our house. The soldiers took all my mother's money and other stuff that they wanted. Then they asked for my brother, Elifèt, and me. My mother said, "They are not here." So they burned down our house and shot my mother and father. I was twelve then. Elifèt was eight. We saw it happen. We were on the balcony of our neighbors' house, watching. The neighbors took us in for three years. When the embargo (1992-94) made it very hard for people in Haiti, our neighbors said they couldn't afford to keep us any longer. They had no money for food. They had to put us out on the street with no place to go and no money or clothes. Our house had been burned down so all our clothes had been burned, too. We only had the clothes on our backs and a few the neighbors had given us when they took us in. When we had to go out into the streets, Elifèt and I went to a church to pray. When we started praying, a woman came and asked what had happened to us. So we explained what happened to our mother and our father and our house. The woman said she couldn't do anything for us, but that there was an international organization on Lalue.* She gave us the name and told us to go there. When we got there, the director was away so we waited for him. When he came, we explained what had happened. He gave us money to eat and took us to his office. The next day he gave us money to buy a cooking pan and every day gave us money to cook our own food. After that he tried to find us a house to live in. We went on sleeping in his office. Finally he discovered this home for us: St. Joseph's Home for Boys. My parents were not bad

people. They were good. My father fixed shoes and my mother worked at home. They were never active in politics or anything. My mother had no political opinions at all, but my father was for Aristide. What would I do to the *zenglando** soldiers if I caught them? Nothing. God said, "Do not return evil for evil." If I find them, I won't do anything to them. But God will.

Jera

I have had five homes. The first one was with my mother and five brothers and sisters. It was hard for her to take care of all of us. My mother was a vendor selling food like rice, beans, and cornmeal. She was a good mother to all of us, and she did all she could to raise us. As for my father, I still don't know who he is or what he looks like because I've never known him. My mother was both father and mother to us, selling food in the Artibonite countryside. Our house was destroyed by a hurricane when I was six. So we all lived in my grandmother's house. That was my second home.

There was never enough money to provide food for all of us and we couldn't go to school. So one day she decided to send me to live with my aunt. I was eight. I don't know why she chose me. I wasn't even the youngest or the oldest. While I was living with my aunt, I worked in her little store and took her kids to school. I also had to sell laundry soap on the streets. Whenever I did something wrong, like if I was late, she would beat me. She would spit on the ground and I had to be back before the spit dried. She beat me a lot with a leather strap. I just worked and never got to go to school. This third home was really hard on me, so I decided to escape to the city. One day I was late and I knew she would beat me, so I took the 125 gourdes that she gave me to buy things for the store and got away by climbing on the back of a bus, without knowing where it was going. After about three hours I got to the strange city of Port-au-Prince. I was really scared because a lot of bad things were happening. For example Baby Doc was leaving [February 1986], and a lot of people were being shot. Houses and cars were being burned and people were throwing rocks at cars that were driving by. I joined in because I was a kid and thought it was fun. Tear gas was all over the place and everybody was using a lime for their nose as protection against the gas. I ran to find a lime. Because I had my aunt's money I had food to eat. By nightfall I had no place to sleep, so a man told me I could sleep in his taptap.* He gave me some money in the morning. I was trying to get on the back of another bus and a man asked me if I wanted to come and live with him. I said yes and he took me to the detention center where there were around 300-400 kids. I was amazed. I was only at this fourth home for a little over a week when Michael came to the director and asked him if some boys would like to come live at his place. I think all of this was a miracle, because I was the first one to be picked along with five other boys. I now had a safe home. I have been here now for 12 years.

I started dancing in 1988 with a professional dancer Michael hired to teach us folk dances. In 1993-94, five of us studied ballet, jazz and tap dance under Eileen Herzog, a professional ballet dancer. I went to the States three times, using what I learned from dancing to raise money for the home. After I got back, at age 17, I got a job interpreting for John Cullivan who was a volunteer for Food for the Poor. John also taught me how to raise rabbits to give to the poor for

food. I was in charge of it and stayed on living at St. Joseph's. When I left the rabbit project, I started working at Wings of Hope, our home for the physically disabled and little boys. I am now working as an assistant to Michael at St. Joseph's. This is what being at St. Joseph's home means to me: It's a place to be safe, it's a place for dancing, celebrating, welcoming and working together as a family. It's our home.

Bèlfè

I am 13 years old. I was born in Léogâne.* I have one brother and three sisters. I was seven or eight when I came to St. Joseph's. When I was living in Léogâne, my mother sold food in the outdoor market, like yams, rice, fried meat, and fried plantains. My father worked in the fields growing corn, congo beans, yams, and plantains. My brother and I helped him with his work because we didn't go to school. My parents still live in Léogâne, but not in the same house. My brother lives with my father but my sisters live in another place, like me, so as to live better, but I don't know exactly where. My mother was too poor to take care of me, so she took me to an American Catholic nun who then brought me to live at St. Joseph's.

Inosan

I am nine years old. I was born in Jacmel.* My brother and I came to St. Joseph's in 1998. My father worked in a field where I helped him every day from eight until noon. We grew corn, congo beans, yams and plantains. He also made cement blocks for building houses. I went to school for a month, but my father couldn't pay for it any longer. My mother died when I was two. My father couldn't take care of my brother and me very well. We all slept in his house, but he didn't sleep there very much because he said he wanted to sleep out in the countryside. There was one foreigner who brought rice and milk to our house every Tuesday. One day, while I was playing ball in the street, a woman came up to me and asked me a lot of questions. I showed her where my father's house was. She finally asked him if she could take my brother and me to St. Joseph's. She's a good friend of this home. She's now helping St. Joseph's set up a third home in Jacmel. Anyway, my father agreed and so we came here to live.

Lifèt

I am ten years old. I was born on La Gonâve* island. Both my parents are dead. I have one brother who is seventeen and one sister who is sixteen. I came to St. Joseph's on a Friday in January. When I was living on La Gonâve, I helped my father with his work building cement houses. He also had a field where we grew corn, zèb,* congo beans, and avocados. We had a nice life and I loved living there with my family. My father's name was Tinene and my mother's name was Foufoun. My mother died first, and then my father. I was really sad when my father died, because then I had two people who had died in my life. My aunt, who lives in Grand-Goâve,* came for my father's funeral. I was too sad to live on La Gonâve anymore, so my aunt

took me to live with her. My sister and brother still live on La Gonâve with my grandmother (my father's mother). I stayed with my aunt for two months. She sold juice in the market and my uncle worked in the field. My aunt cursed me a lot and I couldn't take this. One day an American named Anthony hit me while he was riding his bicycle. He took me to the hospital where he would come to see me almost every day. I told him my situation. He asked my aunt if I could come live with him. She was very happy about this, so I left and spent some time with Anthony before he left to go back to the U.S. He found me a place at St. Joseph's. He brought me here and here I am, waiting because Anthony is in the process of adopting me.

Tijo

I am eleven years old. My birthday is on December 26th. I was born in Jérémie.* I stayed there for six years. I came to St. Joseph's when I was around eight. I have one brother named Jowèl who is maybe nine and who lives in Jérémie with my grandmother. I went to school in Jérémie when I was five, but only for a year because we left when I was six. My father worked as a security guard for a foreigner's house (German). In Jérémie, my mother sold drinks like Tampico, Jina, and Coke. My parents thought the school in Jérémie was no good, so we moved to Port-au-Prince. My father took us there (my mother, my brother, and me) to Delmas* street, my aunt's house. He stayed a week but then went back to Jérémie. I never saw him again. After a while he moved to New York. He sometimes sends cassettes and letters. I stayed one year there on Delmas. My mother found work making food to sell in the market. For example, she made rice, bean sauce, vegetables, and chicken. But my mother finally wanted to go back to Jérémie. Without my father to help, she couldn't take care of both her children. She found St. Joseph's and made arrangements for me to stay there. My brother was too small to stay, so she took him back with her to Jérémie. She used to visit me here at St. Joseph's, but she died when I was ten, in 1998. My cousin and I still visit my aunt on Sundays.

Fobè

I am thirteen years old. I was born in Jérémie.* I have two brothers and two sisters. My father drove a taptap* in Jérémie and my mother was a kindergarten teacher. I went to school while I was in Jérémie. My parents both died the same year. My mother died first, then my father. My sisters, brothers and I stayed in the house for two weeks after my father died. We didn't have any other family. The Jérémie police called two Catholic nuns named Céline and Louki to help us. They took us all to Port-au-Prince to the Children's Services. I stayed there for two days before I got to come to St. Joseph's. I don't know where my sisters and brothers are. I was thirteen when I came here. I have been here for about three months.

Papouch

I don't know my exact age. I am maybe eleven or twelve. I was born in Port-de-Paix.* I think my parents are still living but I really don't know. I have one younger sister who could be dead because she was real sick when I left. I have one older brother but I don't know where he is at all. While I lived in Port-de-Paix, I didn't go to school. My father worked as a supervisor in an auto repair lot. He eventually left to find more work. One day I went out to buy a cooking pot, but I got completely lost and walked a very long distance. I walked and walked until the police found me. I stayed with the police in the station for three days. They gave me food and clothes. They even bought me tennis shoes. Then a woman came and took me to St. Joseph's. I don't know my ages during these particular times.

Lik

I don't remember much about when I was real little. Being born with cerebral palsy in Haiti, which is a very poor country, meant instant rejection. My mother saw me as a curse, and I was left to die. Somehow I survived. I was taken from the hospital to an orphanage in the mountains outside of Port-au-Prince. That isn't what I remember, but that's what I've been told.

My earliest memories are of being cooped up in a crib. I don't know how old I was. Birthdays were never celebrated at the orphanage. Since I couldn't walk, that crib was my world. There were other children in the room with me. It was a noisy room filled with unhappy, sick children, crying and screaming for attention. All of us were hidden, wasting away.

The world created by my imagination was totally different from the reality in the orphanage. In my dream world I had wings. I could fly! But it was only a dream. In reality I was trapped in a body that didn't work, in a place that didn't seem to care.

One day some young people came to visit. They heard that the orphanage was going to shut down. These people who took an interest in us were not in broken bodies. They walked around the room talking to us and touching us, smiling at us. They told us they had once been like us in some ways. These young men were from St. Joseph's Home for Boys. They were former street children who had been rejected, seen as useless. They understood our pain because they once suffered the same feelings of being different, of being shut out from the rest of the world. Their lives changed when they went to live at St. Joseph's Home for Boys. Now they wanted to help us change, too.

One month later things did begin to change. The young people from St. Joseph's became our new family. They accepted the responsibility of keeping the orphanage open. These guys did not let us stay in our cribs. They took us out of the room and played games with us. They treated us like regular people.

With the help of my new “brothers” from St. Joseph’s I finally learned to walk on my own. The guys laughed when I walked. They said I walked like a puppet. I laughed too. Walking was fun! I told the fellows helping me walk that my dream was to be able to fly. “No problem,” they shouted. “If you can walk, you can dance. If you can dance, you can fly.” St. Joseph’s Home for Boys has a dance theater. The theater troupe started giving me dance lessons. Then they created a dance just for me. The dance is called “Possibilities.”

Here is the story of that dance:

A puppeteer entertains street children with his marionette. While he’s putting on his puppet show, two street boys come up. They see a chance to get some quick cash. While one of the street boys pretends he’s interested in the show, the other one sneaks up behind the puppeteer and steals his money. The two boys attack the man and even steal his marionette, leaving the man alone and hurt in the street.

While he’s lying on the street, the puppeteer has a dream. He sees his marionette come to life. The puppet bends down and helps the puppeteer to his feet. That marionette-come-to-life is me. The puppeteer is so happy to see me that he dances for joy. He lifts me up, spins me and sways with me to the music of Jeffrey Osborne singing “On the Wings of Love.” In that dance I can fly!

Because of that dance my flying continues. Now I get on airplanes and fly to cities in the United States and Canada to dance with the Resurrection Theater of Haiti. Together we let people know that all things are possible. Dreams can come true. (See poem inspired by “Lik’s” dancing, page 42.)

Jozye

I was last living at my grandmother’s house when I was ten. When I was two, my mother was sick. Then she died. We were living on the coast, in a little town called Montrouis.* I never saw my father. I’ve been told that my father was White. When my mother died, I came to Port-au-Prince to live with my brother-in-law. He was actually my mother’s boyfriend. Then he died. I was eight then. I liked him but he beat me sometimes. Then I went back to Montrouis to live at my grandmother’s house. I liked it at my grandmother’s house. I used to go to a Protestant church in the neighborhood, and met a lady named Betty there. She was an American and the cofounder of the mission. Betty took me to live at her house. After about a month, her husband died. Betty told me she would find a place for me. I was sad that I had to leave and I was sad, too, that her husband died. I liked him. Betty arranged for me to spend the weekends with her and the rest of the week I spent with my grandmother. That’s what Betty wanted. Later Betty rented a little house and got the other children and me together to live in this house. She hired a housekeeper to take care of us. There were two girls and four boys living in this house that had two rooms. I would rather have stayed with my grandmother but this house was closer to school. After a while I started spending weekdays at the house and only weekends with my grandmother. One day when I came home from school, Betty told me she met a White man who

had an orphanage. This White man taught the children how to make baskets. She said that Eddie, a friend of mine, and I could go meet him. Eddie is another Haitian boy who lived with me in Betty's group home. Then I came here to St. Joseph's and learned how to make baskets. I like it here. I miss my mother's boyfriend the most. He was a carpenter. His mother was blind. He had a sister. She took care of me when he went to work. We all lived together in his mother's house. I have a sister. My sister still lives at my grandmother's house. She's seventeen. We don't have the same father. I have no problems with her. I miss her. When I am thirty years old, I would like to be a doctor, a doctor who works in a hospital. I would like to live in a nice house with a cement roof. I would not yet like to be married and would not have children. When I turn thirty-five, I would like to have children. Five. I can't tell you what kind of father I would be. I don't know. The person most like a father to me was my mother's boyfriend.

Wiwit

My real name is Wendè and Wiwit is my nickname. My family name is Makenson. I think I am fourteen. I was born in Limonade* which is near Cap-Haitian.* My mother died when I was ten. My father died before I ever knew him. I was the last child. When my mother died, I went to live with my aunt, who was my mother's brother's wife, and with my uncle. They treated me really badly. No matter what I did, they beat me. Really hard. They hit me with a leather whip that left marks on my back. Sometimes they refused to feed me. When they wouldn't feed me, a neighbor woman gave me food. The neighbor told me I should run away from my aunt and uncle. One day, I did run away. André, who was director of the home for street boys in Cap-Haitian, came and brought me here to Port-au-Prince. This was St. Joseph's second house then, but it was closed down because of the three-year embargo,* 1992-94. The boys there were then brought to the main house in Port-au-Prince. And André asked me if I would run away from St. Joseph's and I told him, "No."

There were two months before André found me. I hung out at the bus station and asked people for money. Sometimes I would carry their bags and they would pay me. When André got off the bus at Gonaïves* to buy some food, he found me. A friend of mine, a boy we call "the little Spaniard," said we should go to Gonaïves because we could make more money since there were not as many boys begging there. When André took me to Cap-Haitian, I was really dirty. André had me bathe. Then he found some clean clothes for me to wear. So I was living at the house. Another boy who also lived there said let's run away. But I said, "Nah." I didn't want to run away because I had it good. And that's it. That's my story.

I like it here a lot and that's why when Klod, the field supervisor I live with, says he may send me away, I always ask for another chance. I was sent to live with Jonas in the little house in the field which belongs to St. Joseph's and produces vegetables for the home—over an hour away by foot—because I hit the handicapped children. I don't like living in the field. Even though I don't like it, I never run away because I know Michael will never forget me there. I know I'll

get another chance. Now I understand that the handicapped kids are defenseless. They did nothing wrong to me and still I hit them. I know that was wrong.

What will I be doing when I'm thirty years old? I don't know what kind of work I'll be doing, but I want to do the kind of work that will cause God to keep loving me. When I'm thirty, I will still not be married because I would need to help my aunt and uncle. Even though they were mean to me, they are still family. I don't hate them. I can never forget that when I was ten and had nowhere to go, they took me in. At thirty-six I might have children. Though I will not be married. It's too expensive. I would like to live with just one woman. I don't want to be rich and I don't want to be poor. I want to be happy. I will still be living in Haiti. But sometimes I would go to the United States to buy things to sell in Haiti. If it turns out that I get rich, I would have no problem with that. I am a good person. God will take care of me.

Jòj

I used to live in Jean-Rabel* in our house which was a straw hut. I used to help out in the field and also wash dishes. I knew how to cook and how to serve food. I don't do any of this anymore. I was with my grandmother, working in the field. We planted peanuts. I have no mother or father. They both died. My mother was going to the bathroom and heavy rain came down. She wasn't wearing shoes. She was shivering. She got real sick. And then she died. My father had malaria and typhoid. And then he died. I was ten. I had a great-grandmother, too. But they all died.

One day I met a man who seemed to really care. He was nice to me. I lived with him for a month, but he was going to get married. He invited Michael to visit. He told Michael that he had a little boy who didn't have any mother or father. Could Michael take him? And Michael said, "Yes." I like everybody here. I think a lot about my mother and father. I cry a lot. I have two brothers and two sisters. Two are here in Port-au-Prince and two are in Jean-Rabel.* They came from different fathers. One has a father in the United States and will maybe go there some day.

Ezantis

My life started when my mother died. I was five years old. She was working at someone's house as a servant. Somebody killed her. I think it was another woman who did it for the money she earned. I was living in Port-au-Prince. When my mother died, I was sent to Cayes.* My father took me there to stay with other members of the family, and after he left me he thought I was staying with the relatives. Actually I stayed with other people. My relatives couldn't afford to keep me. They took me to a woman who was not a good person. She beat me really badly. I still have scars on my back. See? When I saw how it would be there, I took off. I stayed away for ten days. I ate avocados. The woman found me. She would always find me. I would run and hide and she would find me. I was scared of her. She was a Christian.

When I was hungry, I would break her door open and come into her house. If she had bread or something, I would eat her food and sneak away, always putting the door back the way it was. But she always knew when I had been there. She never did anything. Then one day I ran into my uncle somewhere far from the house and he said, "What are you doing?"

I didn't know that this was my uncle. I said to him, "I'm just working over there." But he knew I was related to him. I was young so he took me back to the woman again. When I got there, I said to myself again, "This is not my place." I took off.

So I left the house again and went some place I still don't know. Someone saw me and said, "What are you doing here? Your family is Sili!" And I said, "I didn't know that," because I didn't know anyone in the village except for the woman I was living with. The man talked with me and said, "I'll call your uncle." I was scared of my uncle. I didn't know if he was going to beat me. When he came to get me, he was really glad to see me and took me and said, "Come to my house. You'll stay with me."

I stayed scared because I didn't know if he was really my uncle. He was living with a pastor in a Christian house. When I went there, everybody said, "Welcome!" When they said that, I felt this was my family and I was glad. They gave me food. They gave me soap to take a bath. And then after that it was night. It was nine o'clock and I said, "Thanks!" Everybody was happy because I was polite. Then I went to sleep.

Then my uncle took me to go to work with them in the field. My uncle is a very good person with a good family. I always did things for people, even people I didn't know and for other people in the village. When someone said, "Can you do this for me?" I would always do it right away. Everybody was my friend. They gave me food. When I was sick, they would come and give me medicine.

Then that woman I had lived with came and tried to kill me. She went to the bokor,* the Voodoo priest. He gave her something to kill me. When she would meet me, she would look at me in a funny way. I knew she was out to get me. When I saw that, I told everybody in the village that she had beat me and that she didn't like me. The people said, "Don't worry. She can't do anything."

One day my uncle came home sick. It seems that my uncle had taken my place. The woman took the magic that was poison and sprinkled it in the field. She knew I always went there. That's why she put it there. My uncle didn't die right away, but he was really sick. I was scared because I thought he was the only member of my family that I had left. My uncle knew that I was scared, so he told me about his sister who lived in Port-au-Prince. I didn't know her. My uncle wrote his sister. She came to visit him because he was so sick. When she first got there, she didn't know who was trying to kill her brother. She could see she couldn't do anything for him. So she went to another Voodoo priest who knew who wanted to kill my uncle. He told her who the woman was and why she meant to do it. It was meant for me, but she couldn't kill. Nothing she used affected me. So she got mad and tried to take my uncle from me.

When my aunt came back from the Voodoo priest, she said, “Your uncle will die instead of you. You won’t be the one to die. She’s taking your uncle in your place.”

When I heard that, I tried to hurt that woman in my heart. The Voodoo priest gave my aunt something to give my uncle to drink. After that, she took us—me and my uncle—to Port-au-Prince. My father never wrote me or did anything for me. It looked like he had abandoned me. When my aunt asked me if my father ever contacted me and I said, “No,” she was very sad.

She said, “I’ll send for you to stay with your father in Port-au-Prince. If one day your father beats you, tell me and I’ll beat him myself.” She really liked me. Before my mother died, she told her to take me to stay with her. She couldn’t do it because she didn’t have much money. She had two sons and so she sent me to my father’s house. When my father saw me, he asked me to stay with him, and I agreed. He started to beat me, so I went to my aunt’s house. My aunt was really mad and threw things at my father’s head. And the blood spewed out. Then my aunt said, “This is my son! Don’t you dare ever beat him again!”

He said, “I know he’s your son but he’s my son, too!” Then she said, “If you ever beat him up again, I’ll take him to stay with me!”

My father didn’t say anything, and my aunt went to her house. Then one day my father gave me some money for food, but I used it to rent a bicycle. He had a new wife in the house. She was not my mother. She was a stepmother. She liked me because I liked to work for her. When my father tried to come and beat me, she got real mad. My father heard that I had used the money he gave me for a bicycle instead. He took me and beat me for that. He slapped me in the face. He tied my hands and feet and beat me like a prisoner. When his wife saw that, she got very mad. She took a knife and cut the rope he had tied me with. And she said, “Get away, don’t stay with your father anymore. He’s just going to beat you again.”

So I ran away. I was young. I was twelve years old. My father tried to stop me. I pushed him back and he went flying. I was very strong even then. When I ran away I never went back to that house to live again. That night, I put my ear to the door and I could hear him talking a lot about me. I was really scared. I couldn’t go in the house while he was awake, so I walked in the street from nine to one o’clock in the morning. Nobody was in the street. When I needed to go to sleep, I found a run-down deserted house. In the morning I had to go to school. I had always liked school. When my father went to work, I broke into the house. I took a bath, put on my uniform, and went to school.

Then when I came home from school, I broke into the house again, took off my uniform, put it back, and put my books away. I didn’t want to see him, so I left right away. He saw me one time as he was going to work. “Are you going to school?” he asked. And I said, “Yes.”

One day his wife had her little boy in his house. He was not related to me but I really liked him, but he always went to the bathroom on the floor. He was about six and should have known better. That particular day I said, “You always do that and I don’t like it!” I spanked him. I

would be the only one who would have to clean it up. I took a rock and pretended to throw it at him. A neighbor who was there said, "No, Ezantis! Don't do that!"

Once again I left the house and just took off because I knew somebody would tell my father I was beating this little boy. When my father came home, people told him that I was beating the little boy, but it wasn't true. I was just trying to teach him a lesson. But my father found me. He beat me. I left the house and went out in the street. I decided never to go back.

But after five days, my father found me in the garage where they put trucks, and forced me to go back to the house. I slept there for one night, but the next day I left. This time I had hoped it would be for good. I went to a friend's house to eat. After that I went downtown in the city. Some police were working there, maybe looking for children. They took me and asked what I was doing there. I said, "I'm living with my father, but he beats me and I don't want to stay with him anymore." They took me and put me in their car. They first took me to jail. But they knew where they were going to put me after a few days. I was afraid they would beat me. I was crying. But they were not going to beat me. After eight days, they said that they were taking me somewhere to live. I thought they were going to kill me, but they took me to an orphanage house in Carrefour.*

When I got there, I saw a lot of children, and I asked where they were from. They took me to the director and they took my name. They gave me a brush, soap, and clothes. They told me to go bathe because I was very dirty. Then after a month and a half, a man named Michael came to take some children. He asked, "Who wants to come with me?" Everybody put their hands up. Michael took five of us and put us in his car and brought us to his house. When I came to St. Joseph's, I found that it was a good place to live. They give you everything you want. They give you joy, a good life. You find good friends. Your life looks better. Visitors from everywhere in the world come here to stay for a while. We clean house, play together, sing and dance. Michael does not let anyone beat anyone. He does not like fighting in the house. He gives us education. He puts us in school. Now I want to be a dance teacher. I've already started. I go to dance school. I learn five types of dance: ballet, jazz, modern, folk and tap. Someday I want to have my own dance school.

Premilis

I am eleven years old. I was born in Cayes.* I have been here at St. Joseph's for three years. I have one older sister and one older brother. My parents are both dead. My father died first, then my mother. I didn't cry when this happened, even at the funerals. I don't know how old I was when my parents died. My uncle came and took my sister and me to a Catholic nun's home. I don't know where this was. He took us there in my father's truck because my father had been a taptap* driver in Cayes. He owned his own truck. The nun's orphanage was only for girls, so my sister stayed. I only stayed there for one night because I was a boy. The next day they took me to go live at Wings of Hope, another home of St. Joseph's for handicapped kids

and little boys. I'm not so little anymore, so now I live with the big boys down the mountain at St. Joseph's.

Lagras

I'm thirteen years old. I was born in Hinche.* I have one younger brother and one older sister who died when I was twelve. Both of my parents are dead. I don't know how old I was when they died.

In Hinche, while I lived with my parents, my father had a field where he grew corn, sugarcane and millet. My mother sold kerosene in the outdoor market. I went to school there for only one year. I loved living with my family in Hinche. My mother died first, and then my father. My little brother and I went to live with my sister for a year in Cité Soleil.* My sister worked as a housekeeper for another family. I didn't do much at this time. I didn't go to school then. My sister couldn't take care of my brother and me very well. My aunt had died and my uncle couldn't take us.

So a Catholic nun came and talked to my sister. She wanted to find us a place where we could stay and go to school. My sister agreed that the nun could take her two younger brothers to look for a better life. We came here to live at St. Joseph's. We've been here for about a year and a half. I used to visit my sister in Cité Soleil,* but she died.

Dòvil

I am eighteen years old. I was born in the Canapé-Vert hospital in Port-au-Prince. I stayed with my mother for a little while in Port-au-Prince where she lived with my older sister and my aunt. My mother sold cloth in the outdoor market. She could not take care of me very well, so I went to live with my grandfather in Cap-Haitian.* I was pretty little when I moved away from my mother. My grandfather had a field where he grew yams, potatoes and mangos. I didn't go to school then because I was still too little. My grandfather died and so I was sent back to live with my mother. I was there for only a little while before she died. I was six then. My father never paid any attention to my mother, my sister or me. So after my mother died I went to live with my grandmother. My sister has always stayed with my aunt. I don't know why we were separated like that. Anyway, my grandmother didn't have a lot of money. She sold *kasav wayal* (cassava bread spread with peanut butter) in the outdoor market. She was old and couldn't take care of me very well. She didn't have the money to put me in school. I was always playing. I didn't know how to read or write. My aunt knew how things were and told a friend. This friend realized that I would be better off somewhere else, with less of a chance of becoming just a bum. This friend was mistress of a big lawyer in town. He paid for her apartment that happened to be quite near St. Joseph's. So she asked my grandmother about my staying at this home. My grandmother agreed, and so I came to live at St. Joseph's. I went to the second home that used to be in Cap-Haitian for a while before it closed down because of political problems

and the embargo.* I was happy there because Cap-Haitian was where I was originally from. When the home closed down, all the boys including myself, came back to live at the Port-au-Prince home. I don't know how old I was when all these things were happening.

Iv

I am twenty years old. I was born on May 26, 1979, at the General Hospital in Port-au-Prince. After some time, my mother and I moved back to Baradères,* which is in southern Haiti. My mother died during childbirth when I was six. The baby, a girl, died six days later. After this, I went to live with my grandparents who live in the same town. I stayed there for two months. Then my godfather sent for me. He lived in Port-au-Prince with my¹ godmother. I lived there for maybe three years. I didn't like it there very much. My godmother beat me, cursed me, and made me work too hard. I had to carry water very long distances. She treated me like a *restavèk*,* not like a godson. So I ran away. I lived on the street for about a year. Life was really tough. I would wash cars and beg or steal for money.

Some of my friends took me to a big orphanage where I stayed for only a couple of months. The people who worked there beat us and I got into fights every day. During this time, the coup* was going on. I saw my friends get burned from grenades that were thrown inside the orphanage. I ran away, not only from the orphanage itself but from people who were shooting guns at me.

Then I lived on the street again for about two years. Life was rough, just like the last time. I was a little older then, but still begging, stealing, and washing cars. I had to fight off men who wanted to rape me, and thieves who wanted to know if I had anything to steal. I became real street-smart and tough, but I still had a heart.

A family of missionaries used to come to the place where I hung around, the Champ-de-Mars,* twice a week to eat. They had five children and I was always nice and friendly with them. They eventually asked me to come live with them. I agreed right off. I lived there for about a year and a half. They put me in school. I learned English while I was living with them. They gave me a nickname, Ti Pyè. I liked them all, but it was hard living with them. You see, I was used to the street. I was tough. Here, I had no freedom and I was tied down to the house. I didn't know how to let down my defenses. I was very discouraged at this period of my life because I had two conflicting worlds within me that would not, could not, come together. As a result, I began to fight with the missionaries' kids. The fights became more frequent. The mother began to like me less and less. She didn't want me to live there anymore. So they began to look for another place where I would fit in better. They told me about their plans and I had no problem with that. A little bit later, they found St. Joseph's. I went on a Thursday in October when I was thirteen. They told me they would visit me weekly and also give money to help the director of St. Joseph's, Michael, take care of me. After two weeks, I never saw them again. They never gave any money either. They only wanted to get rid of me once and for all.

So I stayed at St. Joseph's for three years. I was always in a lot of trouble. I fought a lot and told a lot of lies. After three years, Michael had to let me go. I went to live in the field that St. Joseph's owns. There is a house there with several rooms. I stayed there for a little while. I was begging Michael for a second chance. I told him I would change. I chose to live at the field like a decent human being instead of going back to the streets. I had a good experience at St. Joseph's and knew the streets were no longer for me. I promised Michael I would follow the rules and that I wouldn't be bad or fight with the other boys. I wouldn't give insults or tell lies.

He gave me a second chance and sent me up to the home in Fermathe,* Wings of Hope, where the handicapped children and little boys live. There I worked hard. I made breakfast every day. I helped wash the children. I helped clean the house. But, I did not get along with certain of the Wings of Hope staff. After a while, they sent word to Michael that they could no longer put up with me. Michael said he couldn't change their decision. It was out of his hands. So after a year and a half there, they sent me back to the field where I lived until I was put into prison for theft, which is where I am right now. I love everyone at St. Joseph's and Wings of Hope. I miss them all a lot. I know they haven't forgotten me. They visit me and bring me food and clothes. I don't know when I will be released. I will be good in here so that I have a better chance to leave early. I don't know what I will do when I get out.

Jaksonn

I am fourteen years old. I was born in Jérémie.* I spent seven years there. I have three older brothers and two older sisters. While I lived with my family in Jérémie, my father worked in his field. He grew beans, potatoes and yams. My mother sold food in the market: rice and meat. I went to school until I left Jérémie with my aunt who lives in Port-au-Prince. I stayed there several months before my aunt found St. Joseph's for me. I went when I was eight. At that time, St. Joseph's had another home in Cap-Haitian.* I went to live there for a year. Then Michael came to take all the children, including me, back to Port-au-Prince. The Cap-Haitian home closed down because of the political coup.* It was hard to run both houses at once. So I've been living at St. Joseph's in Port-au-Prince for about five years.

Dejan

I am sixteen years old. I was born in the mountains near Cap-Haitian.* I have one older brother and one younger brother. I also have one older and one younger sister. My father died before my mother. We all went to live with my aunt and uncle in Ranquitte.* I spent nine years there. I went to school for one year there before I left. My uncle had a field where he grew corn, plantains, and beans. We all helped him plant his crops. My aunt sold the crops in the outdoor market. I stayed there for seven years. They couldn't still take care of all of us, so my younger brother and I were taken to St. Joseph's Home in Cap-Haitian. I spent two years there until Michael put it together with the present home in Port-au-Prince. I was eleven when I came here.

Matye

I am seventeen years old. I was born in Grand-Bois.* I spent eleven years there with my family. My mother died when I was seven, and my father when I was eleven. I have two older brothers. I have three sisters, two younger and one older. My father had a field where he grew congo beans, rice, and plantains that my mother used to help sell.

After my father died I went to Port-au-Prince by myself because there was nothing left for me in Grand-Bois. My sisters and brothers didn't come with me because they were scared that they would just end up living on the streets. Myself, I wasn't scared. They are all still living in Grand-Bois—some left, then finally came back. So I was eleven when I left. When I got to Port-au-Prince, I found someone who knew I had no place to live, so he let me to stay with him and his family. He gave me food, a place to sleep, and put me in school. He was a mason. He had children there and one in particular who gave me trouble. He was around twenty-five years old. He cursed me and put pressure on me to steal things for him, especially things from the house itself. I didn't like this, so I left. I spent around a year there.

After I left, the police found me and took me to the police station in Pétion-Ville.* They wanted to take me back home. I said no because I had nothing there. So they took me to an orphanage in Kenscoff.* I stayed there for about three months. I really didn't like it very much. There were too many kids. I could never leave the huge compound. The children were completely shut in. They also served bad food. So about six one morning I took my clothes and left. I walked down the mountain until I got to Port-au-Prince. When I got to what they call the Champ-de-Mars,* luck was with me again. I found a woman who asked me what I was doing with myself. I told her I was lost. She said she could take me to her house where she had a little store selling food and drink. I spent two months there. She didn't put me in school, and made me work too hard. I left.

I found a man who asked me if I would like to go stay in an orphanage where they would put me in school and give me good food. I said, "Yes!" I spent almost two years there. It was a big and famous orphanage. This was a good place because we went to school and after class we had art lessons. We could paint and the people who worked there would sell our paintings for us. We could keep the money. We ate three times a day. The director of this orphanage came and talked to us once a week. There were a lot of children, about 450 boys and girls. I eventually left. The people who worked there stole our Christmas gifts and sold them on the street. Also they beat us. The director expressed his strong disapproval all the time and always said, "If the children misbehave, put them in time-out, but don't beat them!" They never listened. Because the director came only once a week, they could do whatever they wanted.

So I left. I walked around the street for three days. I slept in little hotels with the money I had earned from my paintings. I finally went to the police station in Carrefour.* I told them I had some problems and asked what they could do for me. A police officer took me to the Children's Services. The people at Children's Services took me to St. Joseph's. Michael gave me a bed, food and clothes. He told me he was happy that I had come. The next morning, after breakfast,

I went to the field to work with the other children, but I got lost on the way. I went to the National Radio and asked them what they could do for me. They said they couldn't do anything. I had a little money so I bought food and ate there. They also let me sleep there. The next day I went to another police station. I asked a police officer for help. He didn't know what to do. There was a policeman who wanted to give me money to go back to Grand-Bois. But I said, "No!" A woman who was selling meat in front of the police station asked the officers if she could take me home. They said yes. The officer said that she was from Grand-Bois and that she would tell the rest of my family where I was.

Then I went home with this lady for a while. She had a son who was thirty-six. He had a gun. He was not good and he gave me trouble. He always threatened me with this gun and would always ask me to steal money from his mother to give to him. Also the woman did not put me in school. I finally told the lady that I remembered where I came from. So I left. I told myself that I would look for St. Joseph's. I remembered the area where it was. That same day I left and found the house. People who lived around the area helped me find it. When I first talked to Michael, I told him my story about how I got lost from the other children. He needed a few days to prepare for my arrival. I found a little job washing cars. I slept at the house of the people who gave me the job. When I came back again, Michael accepted me into the home. I have been here for about two years.

Sonson

I am fifteen years old. My birthday is July 14th. I was born in Hinche.* My father died when I was real little, maybe two years old. My mother died later when I was seven. I have one older sister. While I lived with my mother, I went to school. She worked as a maid for a family in Hinche. Before my mother died, she said she didn't want me to go live with my uncle who also lived in Hinche. This was because he had done nothing to help us while we were living without my father. So when my mother died my sister stayed with her father. We had the same mother, but different fathers. She is now in the Dominican Republic. I went to live with my grandmother in Cap-Haitian.* I stayed there for over a year. She was my mother's mother. My grandmother sold odds and ends in the outdoor market. She was very old. Two of my cousins were there too. We didn't have a lot of money, but one of her uncles paid for us to go to school. After a while, my grandmother realized that she could not take care of us very well anymore. So I was taken back to Hinche to live with a man named Sewomen and his family. While I lived there, for about a year and a half, Sewomen worked in his field and was nice to me. His wife, however, was not. She made me work too hard. She cursed me and beat me all the time. They didn't put me in school. I was only there to work like a *restavèk*.* I was just a kid, so I didn't know what to do. I did nothing. I had no money and nowhere to go. But one night a Catholic nun who lived in Hinche came and took me away from that world. They came late so no one would see me getting away. They drove all night and brought me to St. Joseph's. I had nothing but the clothes I was wearing. My only words, "Will they beat me here?" The only answer: "No." I have been here for four years.

Filip

I was one of the founding children at St. Joseph's. I'm now twenty-four years old and really looking for a way to do something positive with my life. When I was just a little boy living in a mountain village near Jacmel,* I saw my father die from poisoning. After my father's death, when I was nine, I ran away from the village because I was afraid of being poisoned like him. I ended up on the tough streets of Port-au-Prince. On rainy days the market area turns to mud. When people leave the market place they need to have their feet washed. I would earn money washing these muddy market feet. However rain is unpredictable, so the little I earned was very unsteady. I soon connected with other children living on the streets. They taught me how to beg and steal. They also introduced me to drugs.

When St. Joseph's Home was just beginning, a boy who was helping Michael find a house asked if I would like to be a part of the home. I lasted about one year. Because of my stealing, drug use, and violent nature, they asked me to leave. Michael rented me a one-room house and continued working with me. It has been a long history of lies, broken promises, stealing, drug abuse, destruction of house property, physical attacks, in and out of jail, gang membership, etc....

At the beginning of this year, I started to join the group in chapel for prayers. I really wanted to change my life. Michael started investing a lot of time and energy into being a trusting friend for me. Day by day I make improvements. Sometimes I slip, but on the whole I've made tremendous progress, especially in the last month. I left my gang and the gang-style dress code. I stopped using cocaine, started going back to school, entered a weight-lifting program, began employment with St. Joseph's as a house security guard, and accepted responsibility for the support of my son.

My old friends got mad at the way I was changing, and they also even felt threatened, so they began to harass me. They arranged to have a powder put on my feet, causing them to swell and break out in open sores. I remembered how my father had died from poisoning, and I was afraid for my life. I packed my stuff and cleared out. I left for two days, and on the third day came back to find that St. Joseph's had prayed for my safe return. This is my only family, but I'm still out of control. All of St. Joseph's love and support has really done nothing. I wonder what can?

Fanovil

I was born in Jacmel.* I never knew my father because he abandoned me before I was born. My mother was a hard-working woman. She managed to live by washing laundry for people in her neighborhood. My mother already had two other children. When I was born, I was just more than she could financially and emotionally handle. So shortly after I was born, I was sent to live with my aunt. My mother would come to visit me sometimes, but she was usually too busy with the piles of laundry, so her time with me was limited. When I was eleven, Hurricane Gordon* tore through Jacmel and killed my mother. I had become a burden to my poor aunt

who was even poorer because of the hurricane. So she arranged to have me sent to Port-au-Prince to live with a pastor she knew.

I became a *restavèk** at the pastor's. I would clean the house, carry water and help prepare meals. I was never given a day off, never sent to school. My pay was simply a piece of cardboard to sleep on in the mouse-infested pantry and the leftover food from the pastor's table—leftovers I had to share with the cook.

One day, while carrying a bucket of water, I accidentally knocked over some iron bars that the pastor had for the construction of a new church. One of the iron bars fell on my bare foot, crushing my toes. I was taken to the General Hospital. The pastor never came to the hospital to see me. With no one to pay the hospital bill, I didn't get much attention. As a result, one of my toes had to be amputated.

An American who visited the hospital became my friend. When it was time for me to be released, I had only the streets to go back to. The American looked after me and finally brought me here to St. Joseph's. Here I had my first opportunity to go to school. I'm fifteen now, and in the 4th grade. I'm making good progress. My proof? I was the first in my class on my latest report card.

Ipolit

I was born in a little village called Kawobit. My father was a farmer. My mother was a housewife. A little while after I was born, my father abandoned both me and my mother. Eventually, my mother met and began to live with another man. He got by by pulling a *bourèt*, which is a long, two-wheeled flat wooden cart pulled by a man and used to haul heavy loads. The *bourèt* pullers are often called human donkeys.

When I was thirteen, my mother got real sick and died. My stepfather thought of me as a troublemaker and a rebel. He wanted me to quit school and help with the *bourèt* work, which would involve pushing from behind while he pulled. I refused. After that, he began beating me and finally threw me out into the street.

I went to Lolo's house—she was a close friend of my mother. I asked Lolo if I could live with her. She lived in a little two-room house with six children of her own, another child she had taken in for a relative, plus a husband who refused to work, spending his time drinking, gambling and sleeping. In spite of the fact that my being there would mean nine mouths for her to feed, without hesitation she agreed to open her home and her heart to me.

Lolo worked as a domestic for a wealthy family. She earned the equivalent of about 20 U.S. dollars a month. It was those 20 dollars a month that the ten people in her house had to survive on. The two-room house was very crowded. There were only three single cots. I slept on a piece of cardboard on the floor. I spent as much time as I could away from the house, using it

simply as a place to eat and sleep. Most of the time I was roaming the streets, getting to be more and more like the rebel that my stepfather accused me of being.

I got to be too much for Lolo. She knew some Catholic Sisters in the area, the Little Sisters of Jesus. Lolo told them about her concern for my future as I was becoming more and more of a rowdy good-for-nothing. One of the Sisters spoke to me about coming to live at St. Joseph's. I agreed. I've been here for about a year and a half. I'm a hard worker and a good 6th grade student. After school and on Saturdays I apprentice with a tailor. I would also like to study auto mechanics and carpentry. Here I volunteer to wash the kitchen pots and pans to get some additional pocket money. I like to play soccer and basketball. I still manage to get into good-natured mischief, but I am far from being a rowdy loafer.

CONCLUSION

A Haitian proverb says that *Ti poul pa mande plim, li mande lavi* (The little chick doesn't ask for fancy feathers, (s)he just asks for life). This proverb tells us that children, and not just in Haiti, deserve the right to live decently. It does not intend to convey the message that just because these orphans come from a poor country that they do not deserve a life of essential happiness and security. There is more to life than only bread and water, and these children deserve more than just that. It is the hope of this writer that the reader is able to gain a more familiar relationship with some of the children personified in this paper, or others like them, and who represent what Haiti is. The orphanages discussed here are a sampling of all the orphanages of Haiti. In this respect Haiti is doing a good job in taking care of the orphans. Life often deals a strange and sometimes terrible hand, but the children with whom I have interacted take their life's hand with a special grace and strive to overcome such hurdles. This paper was written to better inform the world that these children exist. As our world becomes smaller, everyone needs to participate some way or somehow. If one wants to participate in Haiti, the children are a main component for that beginning step. Children in every country unfortunately run the risk of becoming orphans. Haiti's government accepts this reality, and the Department of Children's Services interacts with a great many children who need a place to live. With the desire to help children, regardless of their origin, religion, or circumstance, can come a brighter, more just future, more worthy of what we like to call humanity.

GLOSSARY

- Baradères** Extremely isolated small town near the middle of the northern side of Haiti's long southern peninsula.
- Bokor** Traditionally, a Voodoo priest who "works with both hands," i.e., performs both good and evil magic. A regular Voodoo priest (*oungan*) or priestess (*manbo*) performs only good magic.
- Cap-Haitian** Main city of Haiti's North. Historic capital when still a French colony. Charming architecture similar to that of New Orleans' French Quarter.
- Carrefour** Large disadvantaged community adjoining Port-au-Prince to the west. Notorious for prostitution and gambling.
- Carrefour-Feuilles** Disadvantaged neighborhood not far from center of Port-au-Prince.
- Cayes** Also called Aux Cayes and Les Cayes. Large port town on the southern side of Haiti's long southern peninsula.
- Champ-de-Mars** Large square in central Port-au-Prince, facing the National Palace.
- Cité Soleil** Literally 'Sun City.' Huge, sprawling shantytown on the northern side of Port-au-Prince with population of some 250,000 people. Horrendous conditions, with stinking open sewers.
- Coup d'état** See Embargo.
- Decouzer** Hamlet on the Route de l'Amitié, less than 30 minutes drive north of Jacmel.
- Delmas** A main thoroughfare of Port-au-Prince, with many neighborhoods opening onto it. At Delmas 91 one enters the street which, after several turns, leads to St. Joseph's Home for Boys.
- Embargo** Greatly affected the lives of so many of the boys described here. Haiti's first democratically elected president, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, was overthrown 29 September 1991, and between 1992 and September 1994, a multi-national embargo was imposed on Haiti in order to force out the resulting dictatorial military regime and end its reign of terror. Unfortunately the embargo only made life more difficult for the poor, and actually enriched the military commanders and many of the elite. The military regime, as well as the embargo, both ended thanks only to the U.S. military intervention (or "intervasion") which began September 1994.
- Fermathe** Very small village between Pétion-Ville and Kenscoff, containing mainly St. Joseph's Home for Boys annex for handicapped and very small children, *Zèl Lespwa* (Wings of Hope), and the Baptist Mission complex of Wallace and Eleanor Turnbull.
- Gordon** One of the most destructive hurricanes in recent Haitian history. In late 1994 it devastated the southern coast, especially the Jacmel area.

Grand-Bois Also called Cornillon. Village east of Port-au-Prince, near the Dominican border.

Grand-Goâve Town on the northern side of Haiti's long southern peninsula.

Hinche Largest of Haiti's non-coastal towns, located in the mountainous center of the country.

Jacmel Charming port town on southern coast not far from Port-au-Prince. Considered by many to be Haiti's most charming resort town.

Jean-Rabel Town in Haiti's North-West Department, site of a peasant massacre 23 July 1987.

Jérémie Large town on the north side of Haiti's long southern peninsula, near its end. Notoriously difficult of access because of the poor road over the mountains between it and Cayes.

Kenscoff Small mountain town above Pétion-Ville, famed for its cool climate and its flower market.

La Gonâve Largest of the five main islands belonging to Haiti, located within sight of Port-au-Prince.

Lalue Important thoroughfare of Port-au-Prince. Changes names as it leads up to Pétion-Ville: Lalue to John Brown to Pan American.

Léogâne Town immediately to the west of Port-au-Prince. Famous as one of Haiti's pre-Columbian capitals.

Limbé Town in the North of Haiti, less than an hour's drive west of Cap-Haitien. Site of the Hôpital Le Bon Samaritain, founded and directed for more than thirty years by Dr. William H. Hodges, an eminent archeologist as well as medical missionary, often called "Haiti's Albert Schweitzer."

Limonade Small town in the North of Haiti, east of Cap-Haitien. (Named by the French!)

Montrouis Small town approximately one hour's drive north of Port-au-Prince on Haiti's beautiful "Côte des Arcadins."

Pétion-Ville Town above Port-au-Prince, wealthiest in Haiti, although also contains a few impoverished areas. St. Joseph's Home for Boys is near its southern city limits.

Port-au-Prince Haiti's capital, with a population now (2000) estimated totaling some two million, with more people arriving every day. The result is that the city's infrastructure (streets, water, electricity, telephone) is dramatically inadequate. As life in the countryside has become ever more desperate, peasants imagine things must be better in the capital, and pour into the city only to find urban poverty even worse than rural poverty.

Port-de-Paix Main town of the North-West, the most destitute of Haiti's nine geographic Departments.

Ranquitte Small village in the North of Haiti, due south of Cap-Haitien.

Restavèk Literally: “stays with.” One of the greatest scandals of the Haitian scene. Typically, a poor family with more mouths to feed than food to feed them, entrusts a child to a bourgeois family where supposedly he/she will be fed and clothed decently and sent to school, in return for domestic chores. Almost always the reality consists of only the domestic chores. Food and clothing are from the remains of the family table and closet - and of course there is no time or money for any schooling. In fact, the *restavèk*'s situation is potentially worse than that of a slave, in that a slave represented a not inconsiderable financial investment, whereas a *restavèk* involves no financial output - and is in endless supply. Cf. the famous book by Jean-Robert Cadet, *Restavec: From Haitian Slave Child to Middle-Class American* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998).

Taptap Small pick-up truck used for public transportation.

Tonton Macoutes Officially baptized the “Volunteers of National Security,” but in reality the notorious thugs who were the backbone of the Duvalier regime.

Zèb Catch-all term to designate grass, herbs, hay—or marijuana.

Zenglendo Thug, armed bandit, violent criminal.

Bryant C. Freeman

APPENDIX

A poem inspired upon seeing "Lik" dance

Child

Child you cannot talk
Child you cannot walk.
Your life must be hard.
Be in hope, my child,
accept our love, for we can work together.
Soon you will walk,
Soon you will talk,
Your cuts and sores will soon fade.
And a smile will slowly come.

Now you can talk,
Now you can walk.
Now you can dance and sing.
Your smile shines through like the sun.
It warmed my heart to see!

We love you, dear child,
Trust me, trust us.
We love you, dear child,
Now let that smile shine through!

Sher McEwen
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Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
Canada