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Understanding the Destructive Forces of Colonization:
A Necessary Step to Foster Partnerships of Dignity in Haiti

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Abstract

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Despite being home to an ongoing humanitarian crisis, Haiti remains largely "*out of sight, out of mind*" in North America. When Haitian news does reach a global audience, it's usually in the context of an earthquake, hurricane, outbreak of infectious disease, or reasons of political unrest. These stories remind us of immense human suffering at the hands of extreme poverty. Just a 90-minute flight away from America's abundance, Haiti's crippling poverty and lack of adequate resources is a scandal of our shared humanity.

For over twenty years The Haitian Timoun Foundation has brought people to Haiti on immersion trips focused on the missional praxis of accompaniment. Surveys and individual interviews from past participants provided feedback on ways our organization could better prepare travelers before visiting Haiti. Research revealed that most participants lacked an adequate understanding of the key historical events that resulted in Haiti becoming the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. A four-part guidebook on the intersection of Haitian history and accompaniment theology was created as an outcome of this project to help future generations of travelers understand how the modern-day context of Haiti has been shaped by colonization. This project claims that educating North American participants on the history of colonization and systemic injustice is a necessary step in forging authentic partnerships of accompaniment in Haiti.

Understanding the Destructive Forces of Colonization:
A Necessary Step to Foster Partnerships of Dignity in Haiti

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Introduction

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. – Luke 4:18-19

It had been a long, hot, arduous day as our group made its way back onto the small bus to find our seats. Five days into the trip, our group had grown accustomed to tight spaces and stepping over one another's belongings. Our reminder to "*Crack open the windows*" came once again from our group leader, followed by "*we are going to be on this bus for a long time.*" Port-Au-Prince and Jacmel's actual distance is only about 60 miles, but even traveling short distances in Haiti can take hours. I've grown to realize that the time spent traveling between sites or programs in Haiti while on an immersion trip with the Haitian Timoun Foundation (HTF) creates a much-needed space to observe, think, and process all that Haiti bears to offer. Danette and I sat quietly, both looking out the window as our driver navigated his way past the busy marketplaces, through cadres of motorbikes and pedestrians, and eventually out of the city.

We had just wrapped up a long day of learning, which began at the Haitian National Museum in Port-au-Prince and ended with visiting the Haitian Education & Leadership Program (HELP). We spent the afternoon meeting with university students and learning about Haiti's "brain drain," where approximately 84% of Haitians with a college education leave Haiti to pursue other economic opportunities contributing to Haiti's lack of a professional class. We learned how the HELP program is reversing that trend by providing scholarships and resources for Haiti's brightest students, who otherwise could never afford to attend college. In contrast, 80% of HELP graduates work and live in Haiti after receiving their diplomas. HELP's mission is to raise a new class of entrepreneurs and leaders in Haiti equipped to lead lasting change and

build a more just society through education. Meeting with HELP students and hearing their stories is inspiring, and I was curious to hear how Danette experienced the afternoon.

As our bus started to climb up the mountain towards Jacmel, I noticed Danette's eyes were welling up with emotion as she said, *"It all just seems so trivial now."* She explained how she had a record year of sales in her company, and the results were truly life-changing. She told me rather sheepishly that her most significant anxiety and stress before the trip was wrapped up in the expensive kitchen remodeling project she and her husband had undertaken. *"It all just seems so trivial now - granite or quartz. Shaker or modern."* Making space for Danette to externally process what she was experiencing and thinking felt like holy ground, and I'll always remember the essence of discovery in her voice when she remarked, *"I live such a privileged life."* Danette and I spent the rest of that bus ride reflecting on the concepts of affluence and poverty and the concepts of justice, calling, and our shared Christian faith. We came away from the morning at the National Museum with more questions than answers, one of which being – how could we as Americans who live so close to Haiti be blind as to the level of poverty millions of people suffer there every day?

“Dèyè mòn, gen mòn!”¹

[Beyond mountains, there are mountains]

The Big Disconnect

When Haiti is mentioned, what immediately comes to mind? For most in the United States, the answer is, in fact, poverty. Unless you live near Miami, FL, which has a large Haitian population, the island nation stays in large part “out of sight, out of mind” in North America.

¹ The source of Creole quotes throughout the paper come from Luckner Fond-Rose (Maya), HTF's Country Director, a former Restavek and Haitian citizen.

Haiti only makes the news around the world when disaster strikes in the form of an earthquake, hurricane, outbreak of infectious disease, or for reasons of political unrest. These stories fill our screens for a short while and remind us in sobering ways how desperate the situation in Haiti is for millions of people. News stories will flash depressing statistics across the screen about how dire the situation in Haiti is for most people, and for a while, people will watch and shake their heads at the scandal of extreme poverty. The most marginalized people in the Western Hemisphere live in Haiti, suffering the effects of extreme poverty. Stuck in this cycle and trying to survive on the equivalent of 50 cents a day, most can't afford clean water and go to bed hungry while suffering the shame of not sending their kids to school. Even worse, extreme poverty has resulted in over a million orphaned children in Haiti and created opportunities for child traffickers, as well as thousands dying annually from preventable diseases. Just a 90-minute flight from America's abundance, this is a scandal of our shared humanity.²

Few Americans are ignorant of the despair and suffering faced by the people in Haiti, but what I find genuinely alarming is that so many are genuinely unaware of the forces that have created such deprivation.

Five years after that bus ride over the mountains towards Jacmel, Danette remarks about her experience on that immersion trip with HTF *"It served as a powerful catalyst in coming to grips not only with the tremendous injustice and suffering of the most marginalized people in the Western Hemisphere but also awakened me to my social location and privilege as an affluent North American."* Like most Americans, before her trip to Haiti, Danette lacked a basic

² Facts, statistics and information about Haiti in this paper draw heavily upon the work of Laurent Dubois, Philippe Girard, and Jan Rogozinski, in addition to my own personal experience in Haiti over the last ten years. Jan Rogozinski, *A Brief History of the Caribbean: From the Arawak and Carib to the Present*, Subsequent edition (New York, NY: Plume, 2000); Laurent Dubois, *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History*, First edition (New York: Picador, 2013); Philippe Girard, *Haiti: The Tumultuous History - From Pearl of the Caribbean to Broken Nation: The Tumultuous History - From Pearl of the Caribbean to Broken Nation*, First edition (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2010).

understanding of how systemic injustice, colonialism, and racism have impacted the island nation. The immersion experience served in many ways as a crash course in understanding history, social location, and the concept of privilege. It would eventually lead her to resign her position in a Fortune 50 Company to pursue a life of “greater meaning and impact” as the new Executive Director of The Haitian Timoun Foundation.

Remaining faithful to God’s call of leadership means taking seriously the work of helping God’s people understand how context and history impact the missiological approach to ministry and partnership. Since ordination, the context of my ministry has been situated in the middle or upper-middle-class suburban setting. I’ve always understood that my ministry context has been one where privilege, both economic and racial, and individualism are prevalent.

Indeed, individualism is at the very foundation of Western civilization in general and of America in particular. At its best, individualism has blessed the world with institutions that uphold human dignity, freedom, and justice for all. But at its core, individualism reflects a fundamentally unbiblical understanding of human beings and human flourishing. And when individualism is combined with Western civilization’s materialistic worldview, the result is a highly self-centered, consumeristic society.³

Serving as both Chair of the Board for HTF and a pastor who regularly leads congregants on immersion trips to Haiti, I have a deep interest in exploring ways to better educate travelers on the historical and contextual forces that have shaped Haiti while also fostering relationships that move away from the remnants of colonialism towards an authentic future of mutual dignity and partnership.

This project argues that a commitment to partnerships and a theology of accompaniment require that North Americans understand Haitian history and systemic injustice and understand how their engagement in Haiti fits into those patterns. Section 1 offers a concise, yet critical

³ Brian Fikkert and Kelly M. Kapic, *Becoming Whole: Why the Opposite of Poverty Isn’t the American Dream*, Assumed First edition (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2019). 28.

review of Haitian history related to systems of colonization, systemic injustice, and the fight for independence and freedom. This section is foundational for understanding why Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere and provides the necessary context for the work of The Haitian Timoun Foundation (HTF). Section 2 offers a brief history and overview of HTF and the ways our organization seeks to partner with Haitians through models of dignity and respect through an accompaniment approach. Section 3 explores the theology of accompaniment that has profoundly shaped the practice and methodology of The Haitian Timoun Foundation to repair the historical wounds of injustice that have negatively impacted the Haitian people. Sections 4 and 5 highlight the research I conducted, seeking feedback from prior immersion trip participants with HTF regarding how effective our organization is at helping participants understand models of accompaniment and why it matters in international partnership as a response to Haiti's history of systemic injustice perpetuated through the colonialist system. Section 6 lays out an innovation in response to insights gleaned from the research, which suggests a need to educate North American travelers on the destructive forces that have shaped Haiti throughout history as a necessary step in strengthening partnerships of accompaniment. Finally, the paper concludes by synthesizing the importance of connecting theology, history, missional approach, and the ongoing opportunity to dismantle modern-day systems of oppression in Haiti.

“Bay Kou Bliye, Pote Mak Sonje”
[the culprit forgets, the victim remembers]

Section 1: History of Haiti

The Haitian Timoun Foundation is committed to building partnerships with people and organizations in Haiti working to create a life-giving impact for marginalized peoples. This

commitment can only be understood considering a more extended history of Haiti. Hispaniola, the island currently shared by Haiti and the Dominican Republic, was “discovered” by Christopher Columbus in 1492. Santo Domingo, as the Spanish called it, became an outpost of the Spanish Empire, important for its position as a launching place for conquests of new territory in the Americas. The course of history for Santo Domingo was quickly set-in motion: enslaved peoples were introduced in 1502, and the first sugar mill was erected in 1516. The first slaves were the native Taíno people, who dwindled from hundreds of thousands in 1492 to the hundreds by 1550.⁴ As the indigenous population was dying of abuse and disease, African people were brought in as slaves; the first 15,000 Africans arrived in 1517. The Spanish settled on the eastern part of the island but focused on their more prosperous colonies in other parts of the Americas. In the early 1660s, this led to an invasion into the western part of the island by the French. The French initially cultivated indigo but quickly depleted the soil, so they turned to the more profitable sugarcane crop in the 1690s. In 1697, after decades of fighting over the territory, the Spanish ceded the western part of the island to the French, who henceforth called it Saint-Domingue. This area became modern-day Haiti.⁵

Now fully settled in Saint-Domingue, the French focused on sugar. Sugar production was very profitable, and Saint-Domingue quickly became the richest of France’s colonies. As sugar expanded, so did the slave population. By 1720, the French were enslaving 8,000 people each year from Africa. When the French began to plant coffee, Saint-Domingue’s profits soared, and more slaves were used for yet another labor-intensive crop. By the mid-18th century, Saint-

⁴ Girard, *Haiti*. 20.

⁵ Arsenault, Natalie, and Christopher Rose. *Africa Enslaved: A Curriculum Unit on Comparative Slave Systems for Grades 9-12*. Texas: University of Texas at Austin, 2006. 57.

Domingue was producing 60% of the world's coffee.⁶ Crop expansion required additional labor, as did the high mortality of the slave population due to brutal working conditions. It is estimated that by 1787, there were 450,000 slaves in Saint-Domingue. At this time, 60% of the French slaves in the Americas were in Saint-Domingue, and two-thirds of those slaves were African-born. With such a lopsided population, enslaved people vastly outnumbering the colonists, slaves had begun practicing forms of resistance. Brave groups of runaway slaves, known as maroons, would escape to the mountains to hide.⁷ They armed themselves and attacked plantations for supplies. François Makandal, the most famous maroon leader, led a six-year rebellion from 1751 to 1757 that sought to overthrow the white regime. Natalie Arsenault and Christopher Rose, authors of "Africa Enslaved" summarize a turning point for the Haitian resistance:

Then came 1789, a decisive year in the history of France. The cry of "*Liberty! Equality! Fraternity!*" opened the French Revolution. The impact of the revolution reached Saint-Domingue, escalating tensions between *grands Blancs* (big whites: the elites, plantation owners, and the like), *petits Blancs* (little whites: merchants, shopkeepers, etc.), and free *gens de couleur* (mulattoes, who were often wealthy landowners but did not have the same rights as white colonists). *Grands Blancs* wanted local autonomy from France; mulattoes saw their chance for citizenship and equality; and *petits Blancs* were eager to protect their position in the color-based class system. All of these groups were against freeing the slaves.⁸

Amid this infighting, the slaves, who outnumbered the free population more than 10 to 1, began to organize. *Why were liberty and equality not meant for them as well?* In August 1791, the rebellion started, and during the following two years, the fight for liberation continued. Eventually, France sent agents to try to quell the uprising. In 1793 the remarkable Toussaint L'Ouverture, a former slave, rose to power and battled French, Spanish, and British forces. By

⁶ Jon Henley, "Haiti: A Long Descent to Hell," *The Guardian*, January 14, 2010, sec. World news, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/jan/14/haiti-history-earthquake-disaster>.

⁷ Girard, *Haiti*. 28.

⁸ Arsenault, Natalie, and Christopher Rose. *Africa Enslaved*, 57.

1801 he had control of Santo Domingo (current-day Dominican Republic), where he eradicated slavery. At this point, Napoleon tried to regain control of Saint-Domingue to restore French rule. L'Ouverture was captured in 1802, deported to France, and killed in 1803, but the resistance was still strong without him. On November 18, 1803, the French were dealt a mortal blow, and Saint-Domingue was no more. Independence was proclaimed on January 1, 1804, for the new country of Haiti. Haitian independence of 1804 marks the first independent nation in Latin America. Haiti remains the world's oldest black republic and the second-oldest republic in the western hemisphere after the United States.⁹

However, on January 1, 1804, tremendous odds were stacked against the new republic. It is understood that in the aftermath of the revolution, the population was greatly diminished. The base of wealth, the agriculture of sugar, coffee, spices, and indigo, was in physical ruins; most plantations were burned and ravaged in the revolution. The management structure of agriculture was in total disarray. Formerly worked by slaves and overseen by foreigners, Haiti was now populated by free people who desired their own land. The coming Industrial Revolution was already claiming its place in world history, and Haiti's lack of natural resources appropriate to industrialization, lack of capital, and skilled industrialists would disadvantage her in the world economy. Despite a constitution of free persons, the direction toward despotic rule by a small, wealthy, powerful elite clique was forming by 1804.¹⁰

Haiti's first leader as a free republic was Jean-Jacques Dessalines. Dessalines was a former slave turned military leader who suffered horrendous abuse while enslaved. This new leader assumed control of a ravaged land and hurting people. In fear that the remaining French on the island would regain control, Dessalines ordered the removal of all French settlers. Despite

⁹ Arsenault, Natalie, and Christopher Rose. *Africa Enslaved*, 57.

¹⁰ Dubois, *Haiti*. 16.

removing the white plantocracy, Dessalines attempted to re-instate the French plantation system to rebuild the sugar trade. In 1806, Dessalines was killed, which would divide the nation in two: a black-ruled north led by Henry Christophe and a mulatto-controlled south led by Alexander Pétion.¹¹ While Haiti would later be "unified" under Boyer, Blacks, especially from Christophe's north, would be excluded from holding power. An ever-increasing elitist mindset would spread among the mulattos from the south only to perpetuate centuries-old racism and notions of white supremacy.

On top of battling elitism and classism internally, the newly independent republic would face even more daunting prejudice on the world's stage. The international community displayed blatant hostility to the Black nation. Haiti proved to be an ideological threat to countries dependent on slave labor and was thus ostracized. Haiti's rebellion triggered subsequent revolts such as the Nat Turner insurrection in the United States. Believing in the Africans' innate inferiority, many Europeans and Euro- Americans halted trading relations with the Black republic. They also feared that their countries would suffer the same reality. In this regard, all formal ties were severed except for a quiet trade between Britain and the United States.¹²

Unlike other 18th-century colonial territories, emancipation was not granted to Haiti through diplomacy. Instead, Haiti fought for her independent status through a bloody revolution that overthrew the occupying colonial nation. Additionally, as a republic, France was not expected to assist Haiti to develop. Instead, Haitian independence was recognized on condition. An indemnity of 150 million francs was to be paid and the reduction of customs charges on French vessels to half the amount paid by other countries. Thus, from the onset, Haiti entered independence with heavy debts, which hindered her upward development. By complying with an

¹¹ Rogozinski, *A Brief History of the Caribbean*, 217.

¹² Rogozinski. 218.

ultimatum that amounted to extortion, Haiti gained immunity from French military invasion, relief from political and economic isolation – and crippling debt that took 122 years to pay off. To come up with the money, Haiti took out huge loans from American, German, and French banks at exorbitant interest rates. By 1900, Haiti was spending about 80% of its national budget on loan repayments. It completely wrecked their economy. By the time the original reparations and interest were paid off, the country was trapped in a spiral of debt. In today's valuation, Haiti's reparations to France amounted to \$21 Billion.¹³

Another critical piece of Haitian history is the United States' role as an occupying force starting in 1915. In 1915, Haitian president Jean Vilbrun Guillaume Sam was assassinated, and the situation in Haiti quickly became unstable. In response, President Wilson sent the U.S. Marines to Haiti, claiming the invasion was an attempt to prevent anarchy. In reality, the Wilson administration was protecting U.S. assets in the area and preventing a possible German invasion in light of tension created through the great World War.¹⁴ The invasion ended with the Haitian-American Treaty of 1915. This agreement's articles created a Haitian gendarmerie, essentially a military force made up of Americans and Haitians and controlled by the U.S. Marines. The United States gained complete control over Haitian finances and the right to intervene in Haiti whenever the U.S. Government deemed necessary. The U.S. Government also forced the election of a new pro-American President, Philippe Sudr Dartiguenave, by the Haitian legislature in August of 1915. The selection of a President that did not represent the Haitian populace's choice increased unrest in Haiti. The Wilson Administration attempted to strong-arm the Haitian legislature into adopting a new constitution in 1917. This constitution allowed foreign land

¹³ Sperling, Dan. "In 1825, Haiti Paid France \$21 Billion To Preserve Its Independence -- Time For France To Pay It Back." *Capital Flow Blog*, Forbes.com, Dec. 12, 2017

¹⁴ Rogozinski, *A Brief History of the Caribbean*, 264.

ownership, which had been outlawed since the Haitian Revolution, to prevent foreign control of the country. The legislature was extremely reluctant to change the long-standing law and rejected the new constitution. Lawmakers began drafting a new anti-American constitution, but the United States forced President Dartiguenave to dissolve the legislature, which did not meet again until 1929.¹⁵

The United States' invasion of Haiti is sometimes defended as a benevolent intervention in the name of development. Edwidge Danticat, a Haitian American author, and activist challenges such an assertion:

The notion that there were indispensable nation-building benefits to this occupation falls short, especially because the roads, schools, and hospitals that were built during this period relied upon a tyrannical forced-labor system, a kind of national chain gang. Call it gunboat diplomacy or a banana war, but this occupation was never meant—as the Americans professed—to spread democracy, especially given that certain democratic freedoms were not even available to the United States' own black citizens at the time.¹⁶

The United States occupation of Haiti also left behind other scars and wounds that are felt to this day by the Haitian people. On December 6, 1929, U.S. Marines fired upon 1,500 people in Les Cayes, wounding 23 and killing 12. During the nineteen years of the U.S. occupation, fifteen thousand Haitians were killed. Although U.S. troops officially pulled out of Haiti in 1934, the United States exerted some control over Haiti's finances until 1947.¹⁷

The U.S. withdrawal was followed by a series of unstable governments, which culminated in 1957 with establishing a twenty-nine-year dictatorship under Francois Duvalier and his son, Jean-Claude. Their rule was characterized by corruption that drained the nation's coffers and human rights violations that left thousands of people dead. In 1986, protests and

¹⁵ Rogozinski. *A Brief History of the Caribbean* 264.

¹⁶ Edwidge Danticat, "The Long Legacy of Occupation in Haiti," *The New Yorker*, accessed October 11, 2020, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/haiti-us-occupation-hundred-year-anniversary>.

¹⁷ Danticat. "The Long Legacy of Occupation in Haiti."

international pressure forced the younger Duvalier to flee the country, giving way to a new constitution and democratic institutions. Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the country's first democratically elected in 1990 and twice deposed in coups, in 1991 and 2004. Aristide's successors offered little in the way of stability. In 2011, Michel Martelly became president following a contested election clouded by allegations of meddling by the United States on his behalf. Haiti was cast into a political vacuum in 2016, when the election of Martelly's successor, Jovenel Moïse, was annulled amid fraud allegations. An interim government ruled the country until early 2017 when the second round of elections confirmed the victory for Moïse. Currently, Haiti is experiencing tremendous unrest and political turmoil as Moïse refuses to leave after five years in office. As Haiti's currency has depreciated, unrest continues to grow across the nation, giving rise to gangs and increased violence.¹⁸

On top of political challenges, Haiti is no stranger to environmental disasters. The island nation is located on a geological fault line in a region prone to severe storms. Widespread deforestation has left the country especially prone to flooding and mudslides, which strike Haiti twice the rate as the neighboring Dominican Republic. "Moreover, a number of factors magnify the impact of disasters, including a lack of city planning, substandard infrastructure and housing, large coastal populations, and widespread dependence on subsistence farming."¹⁹ A 7.0 magnitude earthquake near the capital in 2010 killed 220,000 Haitians and displaced 1.5 million more. In 2015 and 2017, drought led to devastating crop losses, and, in 2016, Hurricane Matthew decimated the country's housing, livestock, and infrastructure. Epidemics and aid mismanagement have further complicated matters. Dengue and malaria run rampant, and

¹⁸ Rocio Cara Labrador, "Haiti's Troubled Path to Development," Council on Foreign Relations, March 12, 2018, <https://www.cfr.org/backgroundunder/haitis-troubled-path-development>.

¹⁹ Labrador.

cholera, believed to have been introduced by UN Peacekeeping Forces after the 2010 earthquake, has killed ten thousand and infected nearly one million more. At the same time, nongovernmental organizations have mismanaged billions of funds in aid.²⁰

The answer to the question *"Why is Haiti the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere?"* is only fully answered when considering the long history of repeated abuse and exploitation Western nations have inflicted upon the land and people. Colonization, massacres, slavery, unjust reparations paid to France, economic sanctions, occupation, tariffs, corruption, and prejudice have contributed to and perpetuated a state that contributes to millions of people's ongoing suffering. It is a scandal of our shared humanity that just a ninety-minute flight away from America's abundance exists a reality in which millions of people suffer the effects of systemic racism and historical injustice. When a country and people are disadvantaged and exploited for too long, how can a thriving professional class or sustainable infrastructure exist? Additionally, a second scandal looms in that Haiti's brutal and inhumane history remains mainly unknown to the vast majority of Americans.

Most news stories, articles, or blog posts about Haiti and her people paint a bleak picture of suffering and despair. Often these sources will ask the question - *"What can truly be done?"* or *"Is there any hope for Haiti?"* The Haitian Timoun Foundation not only believes in a hope-filled future for the people of Haiti, but we have also been investing in grassroots-oriented initiatives for twenty years that are changing lives every day.

²⁰ Labrador. "Haiti's Troubled Path to Development."

“Piti piti, zwazo fè nich”

[little by little, the bird builds its nest]

Section 2: The Haitian Timoun Foundation

The Haitian Timoun Foundation (HTF) is a U.S. 501c3 not-for-profit organization whose involvement in Haiti dates back to 1997. The roots of HTF began on an exploratory trip of the Rev. Dr. Rick Barger and wife Harriet to visit their son on assignment with the U.S. Peace Corps in Haiti. The Bargers were struck by the tenacity of the Haitian people and outraged by the conditions of suffering prevalent throughout the country. Upon returning to Littleton, CO, Pastor Barger began to envision a way for his affluent, suburban congregation to enter into a relational partnership with the people of Haiti. Shortly after subsequent trips to Haiti with Abiding Hope Church members, the vision for The Haitian Timoun Foundation was created.

Incorporated in 2001, HTF is a high-impact, clearly focused, grassroots movement that has been partnering to bring hope, sustainability, and dignity to Haiti's children and people for 20 years. HTF believes in education, economic development, community engagement, and local leadership. HTF supports local Haitian organizations that work every day in three primary areas: investing in children, leadership development, and poverty eradication. It is essential to highlight that HTF does not operate, own, or manage any programs in Haiti. Instead, HTF is a grant-making foundation that supports indigenous organizations in Haiti that work every day to create a more just society.

HTF's support of our Haitian partners is made possible through more than 500 individual donors and 19 Covenant Communities located across the United States. HTF's primary audience consists of affluent, suburban congregations across the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The network of covenant communities that support HTF is located across the United States, with

a significant presence in Ohio, Colorado, Nebraska, Georgia, Florida, and Texas. HTF has also partnered with two Islamic communities located in Georgia. HTF's network of individual donors is overwhelmingly Caucasian, religiously affiliated professionals situated in suburban contexts outside of major metropolitan areas.

Over the last 20 years, HTF has brought thousands of people to Haiti on short-term "immersion trips" to experience first-hand the work Haitian organizations do daily. These immersion trips are designed carefully to honor an accompaniment ethic of partnership while seeking to position the traveler as a learner and not a problem solver. HTF believes in promoting the Haitian people's indigenous leadership and is committed to fostering long-term relationships between North American donors and the Haitian organizations working to create a more just and equitable society.

The immersion trip experience has been central to our organization for multiple reasons. First, being immersed in Haitian culture while visiting our partners multiple times a year is the glue that allows our foundation to remain relationally focused with the Haitian People. HTF does not desire to write grants from a board room. Instead, HTF is committed to walking alongside the Haitian people and growing in understanding real needs. Second, the immersion trip has served as a phenomenal tool in generating new donors and sustaining long-term donors for our missional objectives. Third, the immersion experience has been carefully shaped in such a way as an attempt to embody and teach accompaniment theology. The immersion experience has served as a wonderful experiential learning experience that faith leaders can invite their congregants into, which provides ample space for reflection on profound theology and missional practice.

An HTF immersion trip is focused on learning, relationship building, and self-reflection. Immersion trips are not about doing manual labor or service-based activities to “help” the people of Haiti. Instead, immersion trips are structured to visit and spend significant time with the Haitian organizations doing the real transformative work in Haiti. Participants are invited into the learning posture and challenged to let go of the “fixer” mindset. Whether the group is visiting with university scholars through the Haitian Education & Leadership Program (HELP), woman in the 18-month Chemen Lavi Miyò (CLM) micro-financing initiative, or one of the many child education and care centers, participants are invited to observe, listen, and learn from indigenous leaders. Inviting North American participants to adopt a “learner” posture and not a “doer” can often be a challenge for some. Still, it is a crucial mind shift that needs to be made to learn to “walk alongside” another truly. In walking alongside and listening to our sisters and brothers in Haiti, relationships of dedicated mutual support and affirmation are developed. The immersion experience has been carefully crafted in such a way as to value the best principles of accompaniment theology which seeks to move beyond old models which perpetuate systemic injustice.

While many organizations working in Haiti are well-intentioned, some end up creating toxic charity models or reinforce power dynamics that diminish the Haitian people's gifts and passions. Since its inception, The Haitian Timoun Foundation has sought to be an anti-colonialist approach that genuinely honors the Haitian people and their talents. As the organization has worked to foster partnerships of mutual dignity, it has been influenced heavily by accompaniment theology.

“Men anpil chay pa lou.”

[many hands make the load lighter]

Section 3: Literature Review – Accompaniment Theology

Accompaniment theology and praxis is a welcomed response to the historic, toxic, and destructive Doctrine of Discovery which guided European powers and Christian missionary movements for centuries.

The Doctrine of Discovery is a set of legal principles that governed the European colonizing powers, particularly regarding the administration of indigenous land...From a theological perspective, the legal and political role of the Doctrine of Discovery is rooted in a dysfunctional theological imagination that shaped the European colonial settler worldview.²¹

Many Christians are unaware of how connected colonization efforts from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are to official church decrees and papal bulls. “The assertion of European supremacy by these papal bulls had taken such a hold that anyone opposing this doctrine would be considered opposing the will of God.”²² Moreover, missionary movements over the centuries have often had an evangelical thrust dominated by the desire to “convert” indigenous peoples in the name of religion and empire. Many of the earliest missionary movements were functioning as government outposts for political purposes.

Since the Spanish conquest, missions played an important role in colonization, a role that was not just religious but also social and political, Missionaries were often used by colonial governments as a way to change behaviors, extending the cultural norms of the colonial nation into remote regions. Missions functioned as government outposts, extending political control into the countryside.²³

²¹ Mark Charles and Soong-Chan Rah, *Unsettling Truths: The Ongoing, Dehumanizing Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery*, Illustrated edition (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Books, 2019). 15.

²² Charles and Rah. 20.

²³ Laurie A. Occhipinti and Robert J. Priest, *Making a Difference in a Globalized World: Short-Term Missions That Work* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014). 9.

In the last fifty years, there has been an effort to shift international ministry away from the hangover of colonization rooted in evangelism towards activities of service and cultural awareness. The move towards immersion focused on cultural awareness, empowerment, and relationship building is a more biblically grounded way to partner internationally. These models help travelers move past their comfort zone to learn through a spirit of humility.²⁴

The incarnation of Christ shows us the heart of a God who desires to be among the created world fully. In Christ, God takes on our very own human flesh, develops callouses walking beside both friend and stranger, suffers at the hands of human injustice, and experiences the full extent of what it means to live and love in a world marked by pain and suffering. Incarnational theology offers to us a window by which we can understand that no matter what hardship or injustice may come, our God is one who also chooses to step into that reality alongside us with a spirit of accompaniment and tenacity for the living of these days. Scripture is filled with stories of Jesus who chooses to accompany others in the fullness of human life and emotion. Jesus builds authentic community with strangers (Luke 5: 1-11), he breaks bread with strangers, making them friends (Luke 5:29-39), he enters into new towns and villages crossing thresholds society would tell him not to cross (Luke 8:26-39), he adopts the position of a servant and dismantles a caste system developed over time to subjugate others (Luke 22: 19-27), and all along the way Jesus points toward a new vision where all might have life (Luke 4:14-30). In response to God's radical accompaniment towards us, we are invited to accompany others in the fullness of their humanity. The heart of accompaniment theology is the conviction that

Only in and through the concrete act of accompaniment do we love others as "others," as equals, and we are, in turn, loved by them, as action, or praxis,

²⁴ Don C. Richter, *Mission Trips That Matter: Embodied Faith for the Sake of the World* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room, 2008). 16.

accompaniment includes not only “being” with another, or feeling with another, but also “doing” with another.²⁵

With great intention, my primary sources for understanding accompaniment theology come from the denomination I serve, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Nearly all the communities who engage in The Haitian Timoun Foundation's work also belong to the ELCA. Immersion trips to Haiti have been shaped by ELCA clergy whose theological framework has been grounded in the ELCA's teachings on accompaniment, deeply rooted in scripture and the biblical witness.

In the planning document “Global Mission in the 21st Century: A Vision of Evangelical Faithfulness in God's mission,” the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's (ELCA) Global Mission Unit presents the following understanding of Accompaniment: “We understand *accompaniment* as walking together in a solidarity that practices interdependence and mutuality. The basis for this *accompaniment*, or what the New Testament calls *koinonia*, is found in the God-human relationship in which God accompanies us in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.”²⁶ This forty-page document goes into great detail in articulating both the theological and practical model for mission. Theologically the document is offering Trinitarian theology as the basis for understanding how God invites us to participate in the restoration of the world. God is the creator, redeemer, and sustainer who invites us to join in the formation of a new community. The document draws attention to broken paradigms of global partnerships that have caused more harm than good. The historical realities of imperialism, colonialism, and slavery are connected to the modern missionary movement's legacy. In proposing an accompaniment model of

²⁵ Roberto S. Goizueta, *Caminemos Con Jesus: Toward a Hispanic/Latino Theology of Accompaniment* (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1995).

²⁶ Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), “Global Mission in the Twenty First Century: A Vision of Evangelical Faithfulness in God's Mission.” (ELCA Division for Global Mission Planning Document. Chicago, 1999).

international partnership, the ELCA intends to honor indigenous peoples and shape the future of its global partnerships around the value of mutuality. “Accompaniment implies companionship of mutual respect and signals mutuality in our relationships. It assists us towards living into the gift of communion.”²⁷

In “Accompaniment” another global mission document from 2013, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) offers a clear and concise articulation of accompaniment theology intended to instruct members and congregations. Produced by the Global Mission Unit of the ELCA and authored by Executive Director Rev. Rafael Malpica Padilla, this work clarifies the connection between accompaniment and God’s mission of reconciliation in the world. Padilla begins first in the Emmaus story from Luke’s gospel as a foundational lens by which one could understand the concept of accompaniment:

The Emmaus road story helps to illuminate Accompaniment, a theology of mission. We see that mission is a journey and that this journey, taken with many companions, shows us the unexpected and sometimes unrecognized Christ who walks with us. In this journey, as we break bread together, we move toward Christ’s mission of reconciliation between God and us, between us and one another.²⁸

For Padilla, Christ’s reconciling love is the basis by which we are called into mission worldwide. Padilla also makes a note of how historic mission work perpetuated the notion that there was “God’s story, my story, and your story. Mission meant me bringing God’s story to you. God’s story is on my side, and you are on the other side. I’m crossing boundaries to bring God to you.”²⁹ Padilla offers that accompaniment theology helps people see mission differently in recognizing that we are not to be divided by boundaries but are all on a reconciling journey with

²⁷ Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). *Global Mission in the Twenty First Century*, 6.

²⁸ Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), “Accompaniment,” ELCA Division for Global Mission Planning Document. Chicago: ELCA, 2013.2

²⁹ “Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), “Accompaniment,” 4

God. Padilla identifies real boundaries or categories that often classify or separate people in society and suggests that it is vital for one to recognize their social location as they engage in mission and partnership to authentically see asymmetries of power.

Accompaniment helps us see the asymmetries of power in relationships. Because these asymmetries, just like the creation of boundaries and categories, seem natural to us, often we do not see them or think about them. Through accompaniment relationships, we learn to see and think about asymmetries to live out Christ's reconciling mission, the reconciliation that has lifted up the lowly, and has broken down the walls between people.³⁰

To break down these boundaries and truly "walk together," Padilla offers that the following intentional values must be at the center of accompaniment ministry: mutuality, inclusivity, vulnerability, empowerment, and sustainability. He argues that these values, when embodied, help to forge authentic relationships across boundaries where true reconciliation and understanding can be experienced.

Roberto S. Goizueta, in his seminal work *Caminemos Con Jesus: Toward a Hispanic/Latino Theology of Accompaniment*, grounds his understanding of accompaniment in the concept of God's preferential option for the poor and suggests that the starting place for accompaniment mission between peoples of varying social and economic situations must recognize God's will and love for the marginalized. Quoting Gustavo Gutierrez, Goizueta highlights God's preferential option for the poor is all about God's love for the poor not because they are somehow more moral or faithful than others simply because the circumstance in which they live is anathema to God's will for humanity. Goizeuta pushes the point even further in claiming that Latin American Liberation theology would push accompaniment theologians to recognize that "...if God is present preferentially among the poor, we can only know God if we place ourselves there also. The option for the poor is, then, the most important epistemological

³⁰ Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), "Accompaniment," 6.

precondition for Christian faith: to know God, we must first opt for the poor.”³¹ Goizueta suggests that grounding relationships and accompaniment ministry in God’s preferential option for the poor is essential for multiple reasons. First, he means that it forces North Americans to confront historical realities. Second, it highlights the terrible inequalities that exist. Finally, it forces people to begin a dialogue to understand that honest dialogue between different social groups honors all parties as equals around the table.

In a similar vein to Padilla, Goizueta suggests that authentic accompaniment can only be embodied when asymmetrical power dynamics are faced. Goizueta implores readers not only to recognize these dynamics, as Padilla offers but to correct the imbalance actively:

No authentic dialogue is possible between teachers and students, masters and slaves, men and women, rich and poor, Anglo and Hispanic-unless and until asymmetrical power relationships are corrected. Otherwise, the most visible, influential, and powerful voice in the dialogue will continue to be that of a wealthy, white, male Anglo-de facto.³²

Goizueta notes that even when intentions are pure, wealthy Anglo persons need to consider their role in the particular socio-historic structure.

In *Mission as Accompaniment, A Response to Mechanistic Dehumanization*, Brian Konkol seeks to “offer a contribution to a distinctive and important body of knowledge that reimagines mission in the post-colonial world.”³³ Konkol claims the real challenge facing a global world is the concept of “Mechanistic Dehumanization” defined by Nick Haslam as:

*...the objectifying denial of essential human attributes to people toward whom the person feels psychologically distant and socially unrelated. It is often accompanied by indifference, a lack of empathy, an abstract and deindividuated view of others that indicates an implicit horizontal separation from self, and a tendency to explain the other’s behavior in nonintentional, causal terms.*³⁴

³¹ Goizueta, *Caminemos Con Jesus*. 177.

³² Goizueta.181.

³³ Brian E. Konkol, *Mission As Accompaniment: A Response to Mechanistic Dehumanization* (Fortress Press, 2017).1-2.

³⁴ Konkol. 7.

While Konkol suggests that Mission as Accompaniment as an approach by the ELCA could be further strengthened by implementing the concepts of advocacy as highlighted through the examples of Ubuntu and principles from the Olive Agenda, his primary focus of the work is to address how Mission as Accompaniment can guide the ELCA's Global Mission more effectively toward dismantling mechanistic dehumanization.³⁵

In his conclusion, Konkol highlights how Mission as Accompaniment aims to help restore relationships, thus moving communities toward a decline in power inequality. However, Konkol also concludes that the ELCA's approach with Mission as Accompaniment falls short of its intended goal. Konkol writes, "Mission as Accompaniment in its current form implies neutrality and equality in partnership, and in doing so, is naïve in recognizing the complexity of power dynamics and inherent agenda within such accompaniment."³⁶ Konkol raises reasonable caution for anyone serious about a global partnership regarding the nuanced challenges of how power works in the modern economy. Konkol notes how Mission as Accompaniment should be commended to move the ELCA away from prior colonial concepts of global mission while also raising the concern that modern-day economic structures may perpetuate age-old problems remnant from colonial thinking. In a world dominated by neoliberal capitalism, Konkol suggests one must acutely pay attention to power dynamics and who has the power to make decisions. Konkol suggests that an accompaniment approach should be about much more than the "journey" itself. Intentional advocacy paired with true mutuality must be at the heart of any journey together for the sake of God's kingdom.³⁷

³⁵ Konkol. *Mission As Accompaniment*. 104-105.

³⁶ Konkol. 105.

³⁷ Konkol.

Padilla, Goizueta, and Konkol each contribute richly to the body of accompaniment theology which has shaped the work of HTF. Where Padilla centers accompaniment around building authentic relationships across boundaries, Goizueta cautions that genuine relationships can only be made when historical realities and inequalities are confronted, which create and perpetuate imbalances in power. Konkol further builds off these themes while also suggesting that true accompaniment needs to move beyond simple relationship building towards advocacy for the marginalized. The following section highlights the research I conducted to explore the practical intersection of accompaniment theology and influence experienced by immersion travel participants.

“Tande ak wè se de.”

[to hear and to see are two different things]

Section 4: Methodology

Overall intent

For over twenty years, the Haitian Timoun Foundation has brought North American participants to Haiti on immersive trips to visit ministry partners and build long-term relationships with Haitian organizations working every day to create a life-giving impact for Haiti’s poor. This past year the global coronavirus pandemic put a temporary halt on all travel to Haiti for our organization. While unfortunate, this lapse in travel has inspired more evaluative thinking concerning how our organization operates. Specifically, my research has been guided by the quest to seek feedback from past participants on ways our organization could better prepare travelers for visiting Haiti before engaging in an immersive trip. If one of our immersion trips' goals is to help North Americans understand and embrace accompaniment models of partnership, the question became for me: are there things we could be doing more intentionally in support of

this goal? How good of a job are we doing at living into an accompaniment that honors nuanced power dynamics at work, as highlighted by Konkol, Padilla, and Goizueta? My research aimed to solicit feedback from prior participants and stay attuned to any themes that might emerge for ways to improve the immersion experience. As I set out to do the research, I also wanted to know if the immersion experience with HTF helped participants better understand the concepts of accompaniment theology and systemic injustice and racism. The nature of my research led me to focus on qualitative data gathered from individuals. I used primary data that I collected myself.

Data Collection

My research made use of both a multiple-choice survey and five individual interviews. The research survey consisted of 33 questions across the following sections: (1) demographic information, (2) preparation for an immersion trip, (3) immersion trip experience, and (4) after the immersion trip. Of these, 17 questions were multiple-choice, 11 were short or long answer formatted, three questions used a Likert scale format, and 2 asked respondents to check all that apply. The aim was to survey 50 individuals who had previously traveled to Haiti with the Haitian Timoun Foundation through a google survey sent out via direct email invitation. Participants were informed they would have three weeks to complete the survey beginning on September 9th, 2020. Participants were given as much time as needed to complete the survey, and a total of 30 surveys were completed by September 21st, 2020.

Five research interviews were also conducted with a total of 8 people. Two interviews were with individuals, and three interviews were with couples where both parties were present and responded to the following questions.

1. How did you first become connected to the work of HTF?
2. What influenced your decision to participate in an immersion trip to Haiti?
3. When you think back to your time spent in Haiti, what first comes to mind?
4. Where aspects or parts of the trip really meaningful to you? What were they?

5. Did your experience/Have your experiences in Haiti changed the way you think about yourself or your life in the US?
6. Did your experience? Have your experiences in Haiti changed the way you think about Haiti or about how to support Haitians?
7. How would you explain the purpose of traveling to Haiti to someone new to HTF?
8. Are there any ways HTF could improve the Haiti immersion trip experience for future participants?
9. Is there anything else you would like to share with me?

The questions were all open-ended questions designed to invite participants to reflect on their prior experience traveling to Haiti with HTF. Three of the interviews were conducted via video conferencing software, and two were conducted in person.

Methods of Analysis

The survey results were collected and viewed through the use of Google surveys. The results were viewed and analyzed both in the summary format Google prepares and in the spreadsheet format to analyze individual responses. The survey results in both forms helped provide detailed individual answers and highlight any trends across all respondents. The multiple-choice and check all that apply questions were analyzed through the summary graphs and charts Google prepares, while the short/long answer questions were viewed in the spreadsheet model where each response was read carefully. All 30 individual responses were read with an intention to notice any themes that might have emerged. Complete findings of the survey research are included in Appendix A.

Handwritten notes were taken during each interview. These notes were not verbatim but focused on capturing key themes lifted up from interviewees. Each interview was audio-recorded and reviewed twice after the fact.

“Sa ou plante se li ou rekolte”
[you reap what you sow]

Section 5: Findings of Research & Discussion of Findings

Research participants through the survey and interviews ranged in age from 27 to 75 years old. 53.3% were female, and 46.7% were male. 83.3% identified as Caucasian and 10% as Hispanic or Latino. One respondent identified as having a Catholic religious affiliation, while the rest identified with Lutheranism. 83.3% were introduced to HTF through their faith community, and 76.7 % identified as members of an HTF Covenant Community. 60% of survey respondents had traveled to Haiti once, 10% had traveled twice, 13.3% had traveled three times, and 16.7 % had traveled to Haiti 4 or more times. 83.3% of survey respondents had only traveled to Haiti on an HTF-sponsored trip, while 16.7% had also traveled to Haiti with a different organization.

In preparing for travel to Haiti with HTF, most respondents indicated attending a pre-trip meeting in their local congregation. All respondents noted they had received pre-trip materials from HTF in advance of travel, but only half indicated they read or researched about Haiti on their own before traveling. Many respondents and interviewees indicated the motivation to travel to Haiti was due in part to their faith community being engaged as a ministry partner with HTF and a curiosity to learn more. 70% of survey respondents said a primary motivation in deciding to travel was learning more about the work of HTF in Haiti. 53% indicated a strong motivation was to make a difference in the world. The majority of research participants also indicated they clearly understood the trip's purpose from HTF's perspective. However, the majority also indicated they did not clearly understand Haitian history or cultural knowledge before travel.

Overwhelmingly, the responses from the interviews echoed the results of the online survey. Key themes were mentioned in each interview related to how the immersion trip to Haiti with HTF reinforced awareness of privilege and the centrality of relationship building. I

intentionally did not ask a question pertaining to understanding systemic racism or injustice to interview participants to observe whether people would bring up this concept independently. While interviewees talked at length about coming to grips with the idea of their privilege, no one mentioned the concepts of systemic injustice or racism as related to their immersion experience in Haiti.

The clearest findings of my research was that participants considered immersion travel to Haiti with HTF is an impactful and meaningful experience. 96.7% of respondents reported that the immersion experience to Haiti with HTF was highly impactful, and the remaining indicated it was somewhat impactful.³⁸ Upon further reflection, three primary findings emerged worthy of further exploration: (1) immersion travel helps travelers grapple with their privilege while also (2) gaining a better understanding of accompaniment theology. However, (3) most people lack a basic knowledge of the historical forces contributing to the extreme poverty in Haiti.

First, data suggest that our immersion trips provide a powerful opportunity for individuals to step outside their comfort zone, experience a new culture, and wrestle with the concept of privilege. The theme of discovering privilege was prominently lifted up in the survey responses and from interview participants. While some described this as initially jarring, nearly all spoke at length of how transformative it was to be immersed in Haiti and made aware of the significant disparity of the average Haitian's life compared to their own. Danette's reflection on the bus, "*I live such a privileged life,*" is one shared by many who travel with HTF to Haiti. For many respondents, the immersion experience was the first time they had found themselves in such close proximity to people who lack economic, health, and material security at such a profound level. Nearly all the survey participants (93.3 percent) and all of the interview

³⁸ Appendix A. Chart 21.

participants shared that the immersion experience helped them understand privilege in a powerful way.³⁹

A repeated way people articulated understanding their sense of privilege is related to a sense of a “geographic birth lottery.” One participant wrote, “Seeing the injustices that exist within the broken systems in Haiti brought to light my extreme privilege being born as a Caucasian woman with means in the United States.”⁴⁰ Another participant wrote, “I understand that my fortunate life circumstances have more to do with where I was born than any other factor. I have worked far less hard in my life than anyone I met in Haiti.”⁴¹ In total, 21 of the 30 survey participants offered a written reflection in support of the notion that the immersive experience aided them in understanding the concept of privilege. Intellectually or theoretically, one may be aware of their sense of privilege before engaging in an international partnership. However, one cannot negate the powerful force of drawing into closer proximity to a culture and people as an accelerating factor in coming to terms with one’s privilege. One participant said it best in their reflection, “This immersion trip brings you so much closer. I was still just an observer; I don’t know what it really feels like not to have the advantages I enjoy. But you get so much closer, and it is impossible not to see.”⁴²

Another critical finding emerged, which suggests that the immersion experience helps individuals understand and articulate the missiological approach of accompaniment upon which HTF’s partnerships in Haiti are built. I was pleased to see how clearly people could self-articulate the purpose of immersion travel as related to walking alongside those in Haiti in relationships of mutuality and dignity. One of the interviewees reflected, “The immersion trip

³⁹ Appendix A. Chart 22.

⁴⁰ Appendix A. Question 7, Response 5.

⁴¹ Appendix A. Question 7, Response 12.

⁴² Appendix A. Question 7, Response 2.

with HTF totally re-framed my understanding of doing ministry. HTF taught me it's about doing with people and not about doing for people."⁴³ Even if individuals do not describe HTF's approach in deeply theological language, they almost universally reflect that the approach HTF embodies one centered around the concepts of relationships, mutual dignity, and the antitheses of toxic charity, all of which are championed within accompaniment theology.

I was particularly struck by one response to how they would explain the purpose of an immersion trip to a friend. They wrote, "Immersion trips are about stepping into a community and seeing the world through another culture's eyes. We go to build relationships, not buildings or projects. Through these relationships, we see the way Haitian people are working with dignity and tenacity. We partner with them to invest in a better world, starting in Haiti."⁴⁴ One response keenly echoed what theologian Goizueta argues concerning power dynamics in international partnership. "The trip is not about a charity; it is about understanding the community, the people, and how to serve a supporting role."⁴⁵

Reading through the survey responses, I was deeply encouraged to see how many people mentioned the primacy of building relationships to cultivate international partnerships of dignity authentically, a strength lifted up by Laurie Occhipinti in her book, *Making a Difference in a Globalized World*. Although understanding culture may not be the primary goal of most trips, it can help participants to gain a perspective on the experience itself, on their relationships with the hosts, and even on their lives at home. She writes that:

Recognizing cultural differences, not only during a mission trip but also in daily life, enriches the experience of short-term mission. Being a fish out of the water of culture can open up new ways of thinking and being, not just during the mission experience but through greater understanding of our shared world.⁴⁶

⁴³ Quote from Interview with Cindy Brekas.

⁴⁴ Appendix A. Question 9, Response 5.

⁴⁵ Appendix A. Question 9. Response 3.

⁴⁶ Occhipinti and Priest, *Making a Difference in a Globalized World*. 29.

Fundamentally I have concluded that our efforts to cultivate partnerships of dignity is being expressed to those who travel with us to visit our partners in Haiti. As one participant noted, “This is not a ‘mission’ trip. The purpose is to see first-hand the impact of HTF on the lives of people in Haiti and to evaluate if a partnership with HTF is part of you or your congregation's calling. It’s not about “doing for”; it’s about “partnering with” the people of Haiti.⁴⁷

While I greatly welcomed the confirmation through my research that HTF’s immersion trips helped people discover their privilege while also understanding accompaniment partnerships, I became most interested in a third theme which suggests an area of potential growth for our organization. The interview and survey data suggest that what most people understood about Haiti prior to traveling was centered around knowing the current conditions of extreme poverty and deprivation but lacked a foundational understanding of the very forces that have caused poverty. Only half of the survey participants reported reading about the context of Haiti before participating in an immersion trip.⁴⁸ Furthermore, the vast majority of people indicated that they had little to no knowledge of Haiti's history before their trip.⁴⁹

When asked to reflect on what HTF could do to improve the immersion experience, one person suggested,

Better preparation for those traveling and expectations upon return. Focusing on the importance of engagement during the day and making a priority the centering times each day. In light of the BLM movement, more attention to our place in the caste system and how we will be part of transforming the world to be more just needs to be better addressed on the trips.⁵⁰

Nearly a quarter of survey participants indicated the trip did not help them better understand systemic racism and injustice. Upon deeper reflection, this has caused me to think critically

⁴⁷ Appendix A, Question 9. Response 13.

⁴⁸ Appendix A, Chart 11.

⁴⁹ Appendix A, Chart 16.

⁵⁰ Appendix A. Question 4, Response 11.

about ways our organization could more overtly foster this learning. One participant noted, “We certainly felt the tension of racism and began to explore some of these ideas, but the poverty remained the first step for many of us to talk about these issues. We should have talked more about the history of Haiti, which is embroiled in systemic racism.”⁵¹ Visiting the National Museum in Haiti does appear to be a catalyst for people to consider Haiti’s history related to colonization and injustice but isn’t a guaranteed stop on every immersion trip. “Though the notion of systemic racism was observed as we toured the National Museum and as we discussed the history of Haiti and the impact on today’s international policies that affect Haiti, the words “systemic racism” was not used and not addressed directly when I made the trip in January 2016.”⁵² Another participant noted that the connection to Haiti’s situation with their history was only made after the trip. “You see the people and their situation firsthand; Post-trip, I got the history behind how they got there, and now I could easily tie the two together, appreciating the words systemic racism more than just words and tying it directly to people I had met.”⁵³

Discussion of Findings

In further reflecting on the survey data and interviews conducted, I began to see an opportunity emerge for our organization to develop resources aimed at teaching Haitian history in such a way that illuminates why HTF’s model of accompaniment is critical. It is a powerful experience to travel to Haiti to build relationships and experience Haitian culture while visiting HTF’s partner ministries. For over twenty years, our organization has fostered these trips and introduced North Americans to the global issues of extreme poverty, the global wealth gap, and international ministry. On the one hand, it seems as though our organization has done a

⁵¹ Appendix A, Question 8, Response 5.

⁵² Appendix A, Question 8, Response 20.

⁵³ Appendix A, Question 8, Response 10.

remarkable job in helping North Americans understand that meaningful partnerships are rooted in walking alongside others in relationships that promote dignity and not dependence. However, it seems that what we have not clearly connected for folks is that this accompaniment approach is in many ways a response to centuries-old manifestations of colonization rooted in systemic racism and injustice for the people of Haiti.

What we have not done with intention is to educate participants and travelers on the historical events and realities that have shaped Haiti's culture and context. I believe that understanding the global forces of colonization, slavery, and racism related to Haiti will help North American participants and donors better understand mission as accompaniment as more than just an approach to ministry. I believe it will help people understand accompaniment as a means of justice, and in so doing, will strengthen our work.

“Regleman pa gate zanmi”

[asking for an account does not break friendship]

Section 6: Innovation

Over the last twenty years, as The Haitian Timon Foundation has partnered with faith communities, we often speak of our model of immersion trips as an attempted embodiment of accompaniment theology. Theologically this has resonated with the predominantly ELCA congregations with which we partner. Yet, there remains an opportunity to connect our accompaniment model as a response to the historical injustices that plague Haiti's past. The innovation for my project is centered around creating a four-part guidebook titled “Towards Accompaniment: Understanding the destructive forces of Colonization as we foster partnerships of dignity in Haiti” (Appendix B). This guidebook will be given to future travelers with HTF in advance of their immersion experience. This work aims to introduce people to the key historical

forces and events that have shaped Haitian History while striving to help people better understand our modern-day partnership context. It can be used either individually or in a group setting. At the end of each section, reflection questions will prompt people to process what they are learning. I hope that this guidebook will give people a clear understanding of the forces of systemic injustice and racism that have contributed to the levels of extreme poverty in Haiti. I also hope the guidebook will set clear expectations for travelers regarding the purpose of immersion travel with HTF.⁵⁴

Guidebook Structure:

Introduction: Provide facts, figures, and relevant data which illuminates the reality that the people of Haiti suffer from extreme poverty as the poorest in the Western Hemisphere. The introduction will end with the pertinent question – Why is Haiti the poorest in the Western Hemisphere?

Part 1: Haitian History Part 1: *Exploring Systemic Injustice and Racism*

Central opening Question? Why is Haiti the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere?

Core Objectives: (1) Provide an overview of Haitian History from the Indigenous Taino peoples up until the Haitian Revolution (1492 – 1804). (2) Introduce key historical figures in Haitian history. (3) Offer Individual reflective questions

Part 2: Haitian History Part 2: *Post Revolution and The Struggle for Equality.*

Central Question: What is systemic injustice and racism?

Core Objectives: (1) Define the terms Systemic Injustice and Systemic Racism. (2) Provide an overview of Haitian history from the Revolution to 1934.

Part 3: Haitian History Part 3: *Present Day Challenges for Haiti*

Central Question: How has Haitian History impacted the modern-day realities of Haitian people?

Core Objectives: (1) Provide an overview of modern-day challenges Haiti has faced (political, economic, environmental, etc.)

Part 4: International Ministry as Accompaniment: *Moving away from the destructive forces of Colonization towards partnerships of dignity.*

Central Question: How are we called to partner with the Haitian people in light of Haitian history and Christian theology of accompaniment?

Core Objectives: (1). Give a brief overview of The Haitian Timoun Foundation (2) Clearly Articulate our approach of accompaniment. (3) Make the connection to our accompaniment

⁵⁴ The guidebook is included as a PDF as Appendix B

model of partnership as a response to historical systems of colonization. (4) Set clear expectations for immersion travel to Haiti with HTF.

I cannot fully implement and evaluate the effectiveness of my innovation due to the COVID-19 global health pandemic putting a halt to our immersion trips to Haiti. However, once travel safely resumes to Haiti, I look forward to incorporating this resource as a standard part of our pre-immersion trip materials. Long-term, I also plan to develop a post-immersion trip survey to gain valuable data on the experience and impact of our trips. As part of the post-trip survey, I will include the following questions related to the Guidebook's usefulness and impact:

- Did you read the Guidebook provided you by HTF, “International Ministry as Accompaniment: *Moving away from the destructive forces of Colonization towards partnerships of dignity?*”
- On a scale of 1-5 (1 being not at all, five being yes, very much so), answer the following questions
 - Did the guidebook help you understand Haitian History?
 - Did the guidebook help you understand the concept of Systemic Injustice?
 - Did the guidebook help you understand the concept of Systemic Racism?
 - Did the Guidebook help you understand the accompaniment as a method for partnership?
- Having now traveled to Haiti, what might we consider included in future versions of the guidebook to better prepare travelers? (short answer)
- Other comments or reflections on the Guidebook as related to impacting your immersion experience? (short answer)

Even though travel is temporarily on pause due to the pandemic and social unrest in Haiti, the guidebook will be made available to HTF supporters and given to Covenant Community leaders to use as a teaching resource within their congregations. During the research phase of my project, I led a four-part online course on Haitian history within my congregation, Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, which inspired me to develop a more permanent resource. I could envision leading a similar course again open to the broader HTF network and using this guidebook as a supplemental resource for those participating.

“Wè jodi-a, men sonje denmen”
[see(live) today, but think about tomorrow]

Section 7: Conclusion

She's known hunger for as long as she can remember. In fact, she has never experienced a full stomach. She rises early every morning and begins assessing the damage to her dwelling caused by the winds and rain that fell throughout the night. She works early in the morning before the temperatures rise to scorching. She knows the pain of laboring in the heat without access to water. She is filled with love and worry for her children and gladly sacrifices her meal so they might eat. There's never enough to go around, and she weeps at the sight of their beautiful black hair as it turns red - a sign of severe malnourishment. While the odds are stacked against her, she hasn't stopped dreaming. She's tenacious and resilient. She fights every single day to live. She's physically weak, but emotionally she's a heavy-weight champion. Deep within her soul, she hopes for a better future. She is not alone. She is just one of the thousands of women who live in desperate poverty in Haiti's Central Plateau.

What does it mean to walk alongside the women of Haiti's Central Plateau? Or come next to a physically disabled child left at a stranger's doorstep because his parents are struggling to survive? Or ride on a 'tap-tap next to a young student, full of promise who sacrifices eating to buy books to study for the university entrance exam?

To accompany these saints of God is to come alongside real pain and suffering. To accompany is to understand the pain and suffering Haitians endure was produced over 500 years of oppression. To walk alongside Haiti's people is to walk through the destructive path of colonialism, slavery, and white supremacy. Few around the world are ignorant of the despair and suffering faced by the people in Haiti. Truly alarming is the far fewer people aware of the history that has set the stage for such deprivation.

Haiti might be a mere six hundred miles from the U.S. coast, but aside from AIDS, Voodoo, and boat people, the U.S. public remains generally unaware of some of Haiti's most unique features. For example, how many know that the first Spanish settlement in the New World was built in Haiti? That Haiti was richer than the United States in colonial times? That Haiti was the first black republic in the world and the second colony in the Western Hemisphere to gain its independence?⁵⁵

When it comes to Haiti, learning the history and forces that have caused such marginalization has three distinct effects. First, it helps travelers of privilege and wealth move away from feelings of pity towards those who suffer from extreme poverty and allows them to move toward penitence. Understanding how one's own culture has been taken advantage of another's throughout history is vitally important if one seriously wants to accompany those who are suffering. It is one thing to feel sorry for those who suffer. It is another to understand how one's own culture and inherited privilege are entangled in their suffering.

Secondly, understanding the historical realities that have shaped modern-day despair helps travelers understand international partnership is more a justice issue than a service issue. When all one sees is the poverty before them, it's easier to respond to immediate needs. Pity can motivate service towards another, but a penitent understanding of global forces of subjugation invites one into advocacy for a justice that seeks to dismantle all remnants of colonization. Extreme poverty in Haiti will not be 'fixed' through a million service projects or mission trips. Instead, Haiti's systemic injustices need to be addressed as a global justice issue that will require a global response of investment and solidarity.

Finally, it is only in knowing the forces throughout history that perpetuate an abused and abuser dynamic that we can forge new relationships of true dignity and respect. As theologian Letty Russell writes, "...as we move from "other" to "partner," the give-and-take of hospitality

⁵⁵ Girard, *Haiti*. 9.

makes it possible for power to be shared rather than used to dominate.”⁵⁶ Building relationships across cultures takes effort and work. If one is not mindful of the historical dynamic between two people’s cultures, they may unintentionally perpetuate a narrative from the past that positions one over another. “For some reason, healthy people with hearts full of compassion forget fundamentals when it comes to building relationships with those they attempt to serve. Forging ahead to meet a need, we often ignore the basics: mutuality, reciprocity, accountability. In doing so, relationships turn toxic.”⁵⁷

The Haitian Timoun Foundation is uniquely positioned to help educate people on the global forces of colonization, slavery, and systemic racism, resulting in systematic injustices for millions of people in Haiti. For over twenty years, The Haitian Timoun Foundation has walked alongside organizations and people working to create life-giving impact for Haiti’s poor while forging cross-cultural relationships between Haitians and North Americans. Our work’s primary aim is to raise an investment and support Haitian organizations that promote education, poverty eradication, and leadership development. Our organization’s secondary objective is to experience the transformational nature of forging authentic connections between two cultures that otherwise are “worlds apart.” Moving into the future, organizations like ours, who are committed to global partnership in developing countries, have a responsibility to not only build authentic connections of mutual respect across oceans and borders but to do so fully educated and aware of the historical and cultural forces that have created such stark divides. Knowing how world powers, religion, and the toxic Doctrine of Discovery have worked together over the centuries to colonize and subjugate peoples across the globe help short-term immersion travelers learn as much about

⁵⁶ Letty M. Russell, *Just Hospitality: God’s Welcome in a World of Difference* (Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009). 49.

⁵⁷ Robert D. Lupton, *Toxic Charity: How Churches and Charities Hurt Those They Help, And How to Reverse It*, 1 edition (New York: HarperOne, 2012). 57.

their cultural history when visiting places like Haiti as they do the culture in which they are temporarily immersed within. If we as people of faith are committed to genuinely walking alongside the marginalized of this world, we ought, to begin with, a clear understanding of how those people became marginalized in the first place. Ayiti (Haiti) means land of many mountains. On each HTF immersion trip, the following passage from Isaiah 25:9-11 is read in nightly centering. These words serve as a guiding vision for our commitment to the people of Haiti:

On this mountain, the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples
 a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines,
 of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear.
 And he will destroy on this mountain
 the shroud that is cast over all peoples,
 the sheet that is spread over all nations;
 he will swallow up death forever.
 Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces,
 and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth,
 for the Lord has spoken.
 It will be said on that day,
 Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us.
 This is the Lord for whom we have waited;
 let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

God's vision of healing and restoration of a broken world is beautifully captured by the Prophet Isaiah, who reminds us that God's favor is not for some but for all peoples. If we trust that *all really means all*, then the shroud of colonization that has been cast over Haiti must be destroyed. If we trust that God's ultimate vision is to wipe away tears from faces that have known a lifetime of injustice, may we dedicate our lives to the work of dismantling systems that cause weeping in the first place. And, if we really trust that through the cross and resurrection of Jesus, death has been swallowed up forever, may we walk hand-in-hand into a new and radiant vision for the future where all might have life. In the words of HTF's Founder, Rev Dr. Rick Barger, "*On that new day, if one wants to go see the kind of dehumanizing poverty that defines much of Haiti, one will have to go to a museum to see it!*" Until then, we press on.

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