



Share Care RAYJON

Quality of Life is Justice, not Charity.....

As a RAYJON member, those simple words resonate with me. As a Judge by occupation, the pursuit of justice is close to my heart. But my RAYJON experiences in Haiti have given me a fresh and compelling perspective on the concept and the reality of justice that my work in the Court system could never provide.

The starting point for this perspective on justice and injustice is, of course, found in the stark inequity between my world and the third world. They include the obvious lack of basic rights and legal protections, of clean water, food, services, medical care, goods and services coupled with the environmental degradation and damage caused by extreme weather conditions.

It is one thing to read about it, to hear about it, or to watch it on television. It is entirely another matter to see, smell and feel it and to look into the eyes of people, particularly young people, who are living with this inequity every day in Haiti.

Having looked into the eyes of many, I can no longer turn away nor can I immerse myself exclusively in my life in the first world. I cannot abandon my friends in Haiti and I am compelled to do what I can to pursue justice for them. But how to do so and where to begin is a challenging question that RAYJON has tried to answer over the past 22 years.

My most recent trip to Haiti in October of this year gave me hope that RAYJON is on the right path towards the elusive goal of justice, despite all of the barriers, challenges, injustices and inequities.

I was there in October to see first hand the impact of the devastating hurricanes and weather systems on the Haut St Marc region and on the Integrated Community Development Project that RAYJON operates there, with CIDA support. I saw plenty of evidence of a major disaster in the form of property damage, shortages of food, fuel, clean water and other basics, the flooding, damaged roads and bridges, all of which jeopardized the safety, the health and the very lives of many people in the region and hamper their progress out of extreme poverty.

But in the midst of this disaster, there was a powerful sign of change and hope visible to me in the actions and reactions of the Haitian branch of RAYJON Share Care Haiti.

Our wholly Haitian staff of approximately 80 operates as RAYJON Share Care Haiti under the extraordinary leadership of Dieudonne Batrville. Their usual work for RAYJON is in the capacity of teachers and principals in our schools, as nurses and health agents in our medical clinics, as agricultural workers and agronomists in our agricultural program and as administrative and field staff. But during this crisis, they showed their capacity to lead, to respond, to work together tirelessly to help their communities in the face of the disaster.

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RAYJON SHARE CARE

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for Development and Aid in Haiti,
Dominican Republic and other
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Our Vision

*Caring communities building
partnerships through education,
development and aid.*

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CIDA Support

RAYJON is pleased to acknowledge the role that the *Canadian International Development Agency* (CIDA) has played in support of the St. Marc Community Development Project, HAITI. CIDA has matched funds for the project since 1989.



Canadian International
Development Agency

Agence canadienne de
développement international

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Coming Events

RAYJON Board Meeting

Thursday, February 19th, 7pm

at the Big Brothers office, George St., Sarnia.

Any non Board member wishing to attend
should call Chairperson, Peter Westfall at 519-344-1155

Membership Meeting

Friday, February 27th, 7.30pm

at Sacred Heart Church meeting room, Lecaron Ave., Sarnia

Our guest speaker will be Laurie Chan from 'Save a Family Plan'
speaking on "Integrated Watershed Development".

Everyone welcome.

Cuba Night

Saturday, March 7th, 7.30pm at the Moose Lodge, Sarnia.

874 Philip St. East (off Confederation St.)

\$25 per person, includes light Cuban lunch,
door prizes, Grand Prize - \$2000 travel voucher!

Raffle table with proceeds going to RAYJON.

Join in the fun – dress in tropical attire!

Tickets available at the Moose Lodge - call 519-336-7900

Dianne McKillican 519-862-1963

Maggy Barnfield 519-337-0338

It's a great party!!

Membership Meeting

Friday, April 24th, 7.30 at Sacred Heart Church meeting room.

Come and hear the stories of participants on the
Awareness trips to Haiti & the Dominican Republic

and the 10th anniversary Lambton College Nurses' trip to the D.R

Everyone welcome.

RAYJON Annual Retreat

Friday, May 8th – Saturday, May 9th

Anyone wishing to participate should call Chairperson,
Peter Westfall at 519-344-1155

*Remember ...
Reduce, Re-use, Recycle!*

*The 2008 Awareness trip participants to Haiti, filled a hockey bag
with their empty water bottles (Yes!! Plastic water bottles have
reached Haiti!!) and brought them back to Canada for re-cycling
rather than leave them in Haiti as non degradable garbage.*

Return to Haiti

I was freshly out of high school when I followed two wonderful teachers (Stella Petrone & Suzanne Hope – Mississauga) for a ten-day trip to Haiti in 1985. It was only the second annual trip to Haiti that these teachers had arranged. They saw it as a way to educate young people about the so-called third world while lending a hand wherever possible. There were fifteen people in that group and John and Maggy Barnfield were the only married couple.

The places which still stand out in my mind were the Mother Teresa malnutrition centre, a leper hospital, and a school for delinquent boys. With great sadness, parents left their children on the doorstep of the nutrition centre, because they simply could not afford to feed their children and they hoped that the nuns could do better. At the leper hospital we met people who had had limbs amputated because they could not afford the cheap, by our standards, leprosy medication. The school for delinquent boys was set up by one man to teach a trade to boys who had broken the law and would otherwise have gone to jail. The land for this school had been donated by the Haitian government almost out of spite. On the ocean, the land was an inhospitable, rocky outcrop, but through sheer force of will, the rocks had been smashed and buildings and plants had sprouted in their place. Each place has its own amazing history and the memories swirl into solid colours out of the distant fog of memory.

For weeks after my return, I had to remind myself that I could drink from the tap; I didn't have to worry about water-borne disease, like the majority of Haitians. In many ways, I'd had my sense of entitlement stripped away. I was no more deserving of my comfort and convenience-filled life than the Haitians were deserving of their much-harder life. Many of us know this already, on an intellectual level, but to have it confirmed on an *emotional* level meant that I returned to Canada a different person than when I departed.

Years later, I met my lovely wife, Elissa. I told her about my trip to Haiti and we had always endeavored to go there. She was always concerned with issues of social justice and eager to experience, for herself, what I had gone through back in '85. Unconnected with Haiti, we had also spoken about adopting as opposed to raising children of our own. Within a relatively short period, events transpired that would draw these two desires together.

Five years ago Elissa and I started becoming aware of near-term depletions of certain key resources and their likely effect upon the modern world. We had to tear up our long-range plans and re-think *everything*. Elissa left the automotive industry and I sold both of my muscle cars. We entered the renewable energy sector with a vigor bordering on hysteria.

Then, last summer, I heard an interview with Benjamin Skinner, the author of "A Crime So Monstrous", subtitled, "Face-to-face With Modern-day Slavery". His book begins in Haiti where the author finds a nine-year-old girl for sale, to perform domestic chores and "other" duties, for \$100 – but he is able to haggle even that low price down to a mere \$50. I immediately ran out, bought the book, and began reading. If Elissa and I ever needed a wake-up call to begin our efforts at adoption in earnest, this was it! For us, adopting has attained the force of a moral conviction. Now, having children of our own seems selfish given what we know about the looming resource depletions, especially if there is any child, anywhere in need of loving parents.

We hope to adopt from Haiti, as that will allow us to make the most difference in a little person's life. There are a lot of obstacles to adoption and the road is far from clear or straight-forward, but we feel that the possibilities are worth the risk.

Therefore, our trip to Haiti will serve multiple purposes. It will be Elissa's first trip and she is eager to undergo the same world-view-altering experience that I underwent. For myself, I am not nearly so naïve as to expect that a second trip would not change me as well. I'm still a *loooong* way off from "knowing" Haiti. While there, we also look forward to advancing the good works of RAYJON. We also want to soak up the place so that, should we adopt from Haiti, we'll be able to raise the child better understanding his or her early context and also to relay something about the birth-country.

Whatever happens after we come back, Elissa and I can hardly wait to go!

Michael Mai - Toronto

This to me is a very significant sign of development, of progress and of a beginning for true justice in the region.

I also saw, as I always do, the pride and enthusiasm in the school children, but this time, I also heard the first graduating class of high school students from RAYJON's St Patrick's high school speak of their personal goals to pursue post secondary education and to plan careers to make a better life. I heard many of them talk of agricultural development and the hope to pursue more training, that we at RAYJON hope to be able to help with. I saw the leadership potential in this group of students, completing their high school education and wanting to do more for themselves and their community.



The technician at the Gilbert clinic lab.

I saw the change in the Gilbert medical clinic and saw its lab (thanks to the generosity of the Rotary Club in Sarnia) in active use with a busy lab technician, working hand in hand with the medical staff. I saw that this small clinic transformed from a small part time day clinic providing medical treatment for parasites and minor illnesses, to a fulltime small emergency hospital, treating patients with typhoid fever and more severe and acute problems than ever before. The staff were wholly Haitian and working incredibly hard and effectively in very primitive conditions and very limited medications or supplies by our standards.

I saw the fields at our newest venture, the agricultural development project being cleared by Haitian workers, the crops being planted and the education to farmers being provided by Haitians for Haitians under the RAYJON umbrella.

I saw more than 40 women gathering for a meeting to discuss their women's commerce program to learn, share ideas, to sing and to laugh with each other. Their 100% success rate in repaying the microcredit loans for their small business enterprises is remarkable, but so is the level of energy, initiative and empowerment that was visible in that group. This is the same group of women who recently brought a petition to the Haitian parliament urging changes to the laws of their country to afford equality to children born outside marriage and to their single mothers. They too are the agents of change and development.



RAYJON's new agricultural project.



Women planning their commerce program.

Finally, I participated in two days of planning workshops undertaken by the Haitian leadership team of RAYJON Share Care Haiti. It was there that I saw the importance and the powerful results that came from engaging the Haitians themselves in the planning, ownership and responsibility for change. As I sat through those sessions, listening to the debates, the discussions and the ideas of committed, capable, intelligent and talented leaders, I felt great respect and a renewed hope for the future. I felt pride in RAYJON's role as a catalyst for this opportunity for Haitians to participate in decision making and planning for future community development. I watched their dignity and their resolve as they presented their recommendations for the future of THEIR RAYJON community development project.

As I returned home, I realized I had witnessed an important change. I realized with a sense of urgency that our involvement is as critical now as it ever was to support, promote and protect their ability to continue this progress. Our role and our focus must shift to ensure that we respect and empower our Haitian partners to set and to achieve their own objectives on the path to an improved quality of life. . There remains great poverty, suffering and inequity for the people of Haiti. But, there is a growing capacity in the people of Haiti to change their future..

With the continued support of CIDA and of RAYJON, our Haitian partners have shown their power to bring about change and community development that can significantly improve the quality of life for the Haitian people.

With our help and support, this is the way to a better quality of life and justice in Haiti.

Debbie Austin, RAYJON Vice-Chairperson



RAYJON's leadership planning session.

World Water Day

International World Water Day is held annually on March 22nd as a means of focusing attention on the importance of freshwater and advocating for the sustainable management of freshwater resources. This year, the theme for World Water Day is "Shared Water – Shared Opportunities". Special focus will be placed on transboundary waters. The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) are the lead agencies for World Water Day 2009.

For more information go to: <http://www.unwater.org/worldwaterday/about.html>

"Whether we live upstream or downstream, we are all in the same boat".

To mark World Water Day 2009, the Sarnia Justice Film Festival will be showing a film entitled "Blue Gold: World Water Wars" at Sarnia Public Library on Saturday March 21st at 7pm. **Admission is free!** Everyone is invited.

Haiti Importer of Rice and Sugar?

Haiti owes 1.2 billion dollars to the international banking community. They pay 1 million USD per week to service their debt; meanwhile, their schools are collapsing, crushing their children and they eat mud cakes to kill their hunger pains.

Often I am asked why the Haitians are unable to feed themselves. The hidden question is: why are they incapable? Is it a result of laziness, inability, lack of education, or their propensity to violence?

Actually the answer is none of the above. It is the result of foreign intervention and the greed of the elite. At the turn of the 18th century Haiti was known as the 'Pearl of the Antilles'. They exported 75% of the world's rice and exported 50% of the sugar imported by Britain and France. In the 1960s Haiti was food sufficient. Today Haiti is a net importer of rice and sugar. How can this be?

In the 1950s and 60s the International Monetary Fund (IMF) lent money to a corrupt Haitian government, the Duvalier government, which was backed by the USA. This money went missing and payment of the bad loan was forced onto the backs of the poor. Usually when a bank makes a bad loan, the banks are responsible for the losses. With Third World countries, who are dependent on foreign aid, the countries are forced to renegotiate the bad loans or else the foreign aid money is withheld. In Haiti's case 80% of the GDP is foreign aid, so withholding aid means no school, no health programs, no infrastructure, and no children's feeding programs.

Renegotiating loans comes with 'conditionalities' which require Haiti to reduce its spending on social programs, schools, hospitals, reduce by half the number of government employees and open up their borders to foreign imports. With the reduction of tariffs foreign US rice started pouring in. US rice is subsidized to the tune of 40% by American taxpayers. US farmers have access to good health care and subsidized fossil fuel imports. The Haitian farmers, with the forced government cut backs have no agricultural extension services, no cheap fertilizer or seed inputs, no crop insurance, no health care system, and they work the smallest and least fertile landholdings. Thus, even with the lowest of wages the Haitian farmers cannot produce rice for less than the American farmers. So the poor population buys the foreign rice, or eats rice donated by churches and the World Food Plan, thus further decimating their own agricultural system.

The decline in sugar exports follows a similar pattern, but in this case the processing of sugar has been eliminated from Haiti and moved offshore to the US. Even though Haiti grows sugar they still need to buy refined sugar from foreign sources. This too was due to foreign manipulation. The 'conditionalities' of IMF loans forced the Haitian government to privatize government holdings including the state run sugar mills. Once sold to wealthy families the mills were shut down and the processing and profits were moved out of the country.

This is how foreign intervention has caused the food crisis in Haiti. It has nothing to do with flaws in the Haitian people; it is pure political manipulation and greed of the transnational elite. So today, as Haiti pays 1 million USD per week to service their debt and to enrich the elite and the international banking system, and the poor uphold the US agricultural system by consuming American products, their schools are collapsing and crushing their children and they are eating dirt cakes to kill the hunger pains in their stomachs.

RAYJON's Urban Community Project is working against this injustice by supporting small farmers. This past year the Sacred Heart Nutrition Centre joined in partnership with a farming cooperative on the outskirts of Cap Haitien. Through this partnership we are able to provide the malnourished children that visit the centre fresh vegetables to supplement the rice, beans, eggs and cornmeal. Fruit trees have been planted and soon fresh fruit will be offered too. It is through the generosity of RAYJON supporters that this project has been established and is serving both the immediate needs of the children and the long term survival of the country.

To become involved in bringing Haiti relief please contact Jennifer Vansteenkiste at cahpartner@yahoo.ca or visit the RAYJON web site at <http://rayjon.sarnia.com>.

Jennifer Vansteenkiste, Director of Urban Community project in Cap Haitien

Condolences to Susan Falcone and Ives Mazzarolo on the death of Susan's father in October. Susan and Ives were members of the 2007 Eyeglass Clinic in Guatemala.

Condolences to U.B. Weber of St. Jacobs on the death of his wife, Edna, on November 30th. U.B. has been a participant since 1999 on many RAYJON Hope for Haiti work teams.

Condolences to Sam and Joanna Giresi and their family, on the death of Sam's father, Gandolfo, in January.

Condolences to Emma, Jade and Liam Lindop on the death of their father, Tony, in January. And to Tony's brother, Andy. Tony was a participant in the first RAYJON awareness trip to Haiti in 1986.

Condolences to Hap and Jodie Gottfried on the death of Hap's brother, John in Hamilton. Hap and Jodie have been long time supporters of RAYJON.

Best wishes and good luck to Ryan DeVries on his attempt to climb Mount Kilimanjaro (19,300ft.) in Africa. Ryan is part of a 24 person group attempting to reach the summit on February 14th while raising funds for the Big Brother organization in Sarnia. Ryan is a Haiti Awareness trip co-leader and has been to Haiti many times with RAYJON.

Justice Film Festival

Sarnia's *first* Justice Film Festival weekend will be held from Friday, May 1st to Sunday, May 3rd at Sarnia Public Library. Admission is *free* and everyone is encouraged to attend 1, 2 or all the films being shown.

Friday: "The Unforeseen" (land development)

Saturday: "We Feed the World" (world food issues)

"The Big Sell Out" (world-wide privatization of services)

"Triage" (Dr. James Orbinski revisits Rwanda)

Sunday: "We are Together" (African children overcome hardship – *family film*)

"Tangier Treehouse" (Moroccan street children transformed)

For further information contact: Thea DeGroot 519-542-5009

RAYJON is a proud sponsor of the Sarnia Justice Film Festival

Check out the Red Dot Campaign!

Quick & easy ways to decrease the amount of junk mail you receive.

The Red Dot Campaign draws attention to Canada Post's Consumer's Green Choice Program. Canada Post decrements its database each time an individual opts out of receiving admail/junk mail. Over time, our choice to opt out will make a positive impact by reducing print quantities.

Canada Post's Green Choices Program.

Paper is precious. Vast amounts of trees, electricity, water and fossil fuels are used in the production and distribution of paper-based advertising. And yet the industry standard is a 2% response rate! That means 98% of these resources are wasted! We say it's time advertisers join the 21st century and adopt data-driven print technologies, electronic communications and social marketing. The Red Dot Campaign will help inspire this change.

A similar campaign exists for those who live, or know people state side. It's called Green Dimes .

So Rewarding!

I've been a member of an eyeglass team travelling to developing countries for the last 12 years and have been privileged with the opportunity to touch the lives of people in various parts of the world. Every trip has its own unique circumstances and challenges. This year (Nov. 2008) our team of 20 volunteers travelled to El Salvador, our ninth different country. Our reasons for going were somewhat unique; usually we initiate the contacts, but this time someone in El Salvador found our group on the internet and requested that we come to help their people.



On the left, Carla at work at a RAYJON eyeglass clinic.

The Ministry of Education in El Salvador, with some funding from USAID, is working on a project from July 2005 to September 2009 with the Academy for Education Development (AED). The project works in 500 schools, benefiting approximately 3,000 teachers and 100,000 students from Grade 1 to Grade 6. During the week of October 27th 31st, they arranged for dental and vision testing for the students, teachers, parents and the community at large in Usulután.

This was a unique opportunity for us to team up with the various organizations, to help as many people as possible. It's amazing how language barriers and other challenges can be overcome by people who all have the same goal! Our piece of this clinic was to assess the vision and provide eyeglasses to the adults. In 5 days we saw just over 800 patients and dispensed close to 700 pairs of prescription glasses and over 300 pairs of sunglasses.

There were 35 prescriptions which couldn't be filled from our inventory in El Salvador. Some of the lenses needed were available from our inventory in Canada, and with the help of Dr. Tanner, Dr. Andrews and lenses donated by Essilor Canada, we were able to put together the glasses needed. They will be fitted by AED personnel in El Salvador.

Many of our patients had never had their eyes tested, including:

a 63 year old driver with very poor distance vision

- a 46 year old jewellery maker with 20/200 near vision (very poor)
- a 37 year old teacher with dense cataracts
- several patients in their 70's, and most amazingly ...
- police officers who were issued guns without ever having their eyes tested!

It never ceases to amaze me how these people can function in their normal activities without proper vision. This is something that we see in all the countries we visit. Some patients don't even realize that it's possible to have better vision until we give them glasses. This is part of what makes it so rewarding. I find there's no greater pleasure than to help someone in need. To see the smiles, or sometimes tears of joy, on people's faces when they leave the clinic is priceless.

“You cannot legislate the poor into freedom by legislating the wealthy out of freedom. What one person receives without working for, another person must work for without receiving. The government cannot give to anybody anything that the government does not first take from somebody else. When half of the people get the idea that they do not have to work because the other half is going to take care of them, and when the other half gets the idea that it does no good to work because somebody else is going to get what they work for, that my dear friend, is about the end of any nation. You cannot multiply wealth by dividing it.”

The late Dr. Adrian Rogers 1931-2005