

The Association for Trauma Outreach & Prevention (ATOP)

[www.meaningfulworld.com](http://www.meaningfulworld.com)

NY Office

185 East 85th Street, Mezzanine #4 New York, NY 10028

Phone: 1 (201) 941 2266 E-mail: [drkalayjian@Meaningfulworld.com](mailto:drkalayjian@Meaningfulworld.com)

## **ATOP Meaningfulworld Psychosocial Rehabilitation Mission for Haiti:**

### **Healing, Ecology & Spirituality: Utilizing the 7-step Integrative Healing Model in Haiti – ATOP Meaningfulworld Team 5 Haiti - New York 2012**

**Lisa Schiller, Shayla Tumbling, Michele Gonen and Richard Griff**

Our ATOP Meaningfulworld Team 5 was comprised of Dr. Ani Kalayjian, Shayla Tumbling, Michele Gonen, Richard Griff and Lisa Schiller. After Dr. Kalayjian's departure to spearhead ATOP Meaningfulworld's African Mission, we continued working in Port au Prince, Petionville for another two weeks. We worked at an orphanage, which is a long term facility for 45 boys aged 6-20, and at a newly developed health center, where we trained psychology students to familiarize them with the 7- Step Integrative Healing Model. We were also following up on research previously conducted by ATOP Teams on the recovery of Haitian Earthquake survivors.

After Dr. Ani's departure, Lisa was our team leader, she was good at improvising and that was an opportunity to see how it could be incorporated in everyday life. Shayla and Michele came from the same academic training and they were rigorous in processing and the research process, Richard was great in sports therapy and keeping the 4-agreements alive and practiced. We were a wonderfully cohesive team, drawing on each other's strengths and maintaining open communication. We processed twice daily, in the mornings focusing on our personal goals and at night we processed our daily feelings, goal achievements, and potential improvements for the following day with Dr. Ani via Skype.



ATOP Team processing with translators and other team leaders at the orphanage

Working with the orphans was meaningful for all of us. We ran groups in art, sports, meditation, and yoga to relay the 7-Step Integrative Healing Model in a way that is appropriate for children and adolescents- as well as having a great deal of fun encouraging creative expression and emotional intelligence. The complete lack of structure and instruction in the facility is not conducive to teaching new concepts but we feel we have been able to overcome the challenges and implement some new ways of thinking by: expanding their coping skills, teaching them yoga and meditation (which they seem to really like), creating a space for them to have a voice and express it, learning co- operation and respect for each other and themselves via the Four Agreements (Miguel Ruize, 1997), (which was not part of their vocabulary, based on our observation) and discussing what is meaningful in their world. Using art as a vehicle, we introduced them to an awareness of the environment, what it provides, to enable them to live harmoniously, and how they can respect and protect natural resources as well as use them to bring consolation, joy and appreciation. We had both the older and younger boys complete the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire and then had a discussion group afterwards with the older boys about the questionnaire. We were able to repeat the Harvard Trauma questionnaire with some of them after our interventions as a post-test. The closing each day usually drew a large crowd, even if they did not always attend the groups because they were watching TV or laying about or playing marbles, and it allowed an opportunity for the boys to express gratitude and we appreciated that we were one of the situations for which they felt gratitude. We have definitely developed a wonderful relationship and affection with many of them.



ATOP Team with children and other participants

At the health center which Father Wismick, VP, Universite de Notre Dame is developing, we trained undergraduate psychology students from the Université Notre-Dame d'Haïti in the 7-Step Integrative Model. It was refreshing to see their level of intellectual curiosity and knowledge of clinical psychology theories. They

questioned the scientific validity and research basis for our model which required us to address them and give the scientific rationale. We were encouraged to see the growing interest in psychology and mental health in Haiti. We have found it exhilarating to be able to spend two days educating them on the 7- Step Integrative Healing Model as well as hoping that their very positive response to the meditation might lead them to integrate it into their own everyday lives. They completed the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire as well as the Heartland Forgiveness Questionnaire, both of which the students had completed at the conference, in order to assess changes over a week's time after having been given the training by the ATOP Team.



The Ubuntu circle of oneness at the end of our energizing exercises



Shayla is leading a relaxation and energy balancing exercises



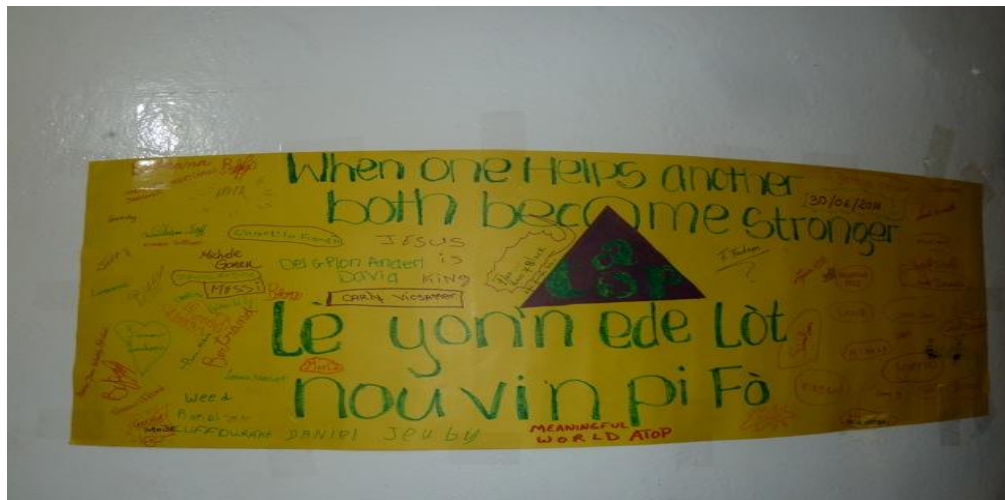
Struggles for each day

We were invited to do additional training workshops on our next mission with the staff of two organizations who were actively working on trauma healing since the earthquake: The Center for Mind-Body Medicine directed by Linda Delmont Metayer (MPH) and URAMEL (Unite du Recherche et d'Action Medico Legale), a psychological training center directed by a psychologist, Rosaline Benjamin.

Our ATOP Team experienced constant logistical challenges in Haiti at every step of the way including: lack of public transportation (you cannot begin to imagine!) Manhattan prices for food and transportation if you do not want to travel by Tap-Tap (a congested pickup truck with a bench in the back); safety on the roads (we already had one accident, and witnessed many), lack of affordable accommodations (thank goodness for the Catholic rest houses, who provided reduced rates), ATMs (never worked), getting gasoline (expensive and difficult to find), traffic congestion (no traffic lights), apathy, lack of systems to address virtually anything, extremely disturbing poverty (where most live on \$1 day), finding a place to dispose of garbage, frustration with negotiating, filth, fierce heat (such as 101 degrees F), and, last, but not least, language barriers.

In regard to our own work, our vocabulary does not translate easily because in Haitian Creole (Kreyol) there are no words for coping, lonely, universe, or the subtleties of emotions. We encountered what we believe may be a cultural phenomena with the students when the reaction to a telling of a sad story was laughter amongst the others. They said that Haitians always try to cheer the other up, which was evident by the peers' laughter, rather than expression of empathy and validation. The students also were reactive to the concept of Gaia Mother Earth because they did not feel it was relevant to Haiti and they were quick to point out that it was unknown or unacceptable. Considering the garbage everywhere and the dirty, dusty environment they live in, it took some time to convince them that we are all connected to the earth and can find solace in nature even in a city. It is hard to push for environmental awareness when it is painful to be aware of one's close surroundings. Using the 7-Step Integrative Healing Model proved to be effective in getting through to the students and by the second day many could speak to how connecting with nature could be healing.

Sophonie Zidor, the organizer of the student group sent us an email saying "je remercie toute l'équipe, vous avez été extraordinaire, j'espère travailler avec vous une prochaine fois" (*"I thank all of the ATOP team, you were extraordinary; I hope to work with you another time"*). One of the orphan boys had a positive response to the training stating, "I feel calmer [after the meditation and body movements]."



Our ATOP motto: When one helps another, both become stronger

Haitians are amazingly resilient people but the stress level they live with every day is enormous. Before the earthquake life was difficult, challenging, and required much fortitude. Since that fatal day layered on top of the already incredulous manner in which Haitian life unfolds, life in every way is now prised through the earthquake and daily life is unbelievably and indescribably hard. Nevertheless, using the 7-Step Integrative Healing Model, we felt that we raised awareness and provided tools to aid in recovery and healing.

If you are interested to join our ATOP Humanitarian Teams kindly contact Dr. Kalayjian at [DrKalayjian@meaningfulworld.com](mailto:DrKalayjian@meaningfulworld.com), if you wish to send us a tax-deductible donation kindly do so on line at [www.Meaningfulworld.com](http://www.Meaningfulworld.com).

**Special gratitude to:** Fr. Wismick, VP Notre Dame University, Nekya Young, Dr. Deena Sue Fuller, Brenita Seay, Tina Tumbling, Garnetta Moody, Carmen Lewis, Michelle Ocen, Whitestone Baptist Church (Lawrence, MS), Christopher Michael Sam, Tammy Taylor, Tasha Fletcher, John Gore, Oasis Center (Nashville, TN), Rokeisha Bryant, Kevin Smith, New Jerusalem Church (Jackson, MS), Nusblat family, Mazer family, Gonen family, Jeneane Solz, Rebecca Skolnick, and Rachel Tirnady, Dr. Richard Serchuk (donations of toothbrushes & toothpastes), Maria Flores (paper, pens, & office supplies), Christine Keefe, Jim Noble, The Findlay Family Foundation, Montgomery Gallery, Gabrielle Vallarino, Vincent Vallarino, Hiroko Saeki, Simon Capstick-Dale, Bruce and Janice Miller, Hope Davis, Karen van Lengen, Tina Schiller, Chelsea Restoration, FW Green, Greta Schiller, Jill Newhouse, Susan Bodo, Linda Duchin, Joyce McKee, Sarah Bartlett, Julie Reinganum, Linda Weinstein, Karen Jacobson, Raelynn Ambach, Josephine Diamond, Doug Frazer, Karen Wagner, Susan Hopp, Jody Klotz, Bill and Donna Hacker, Bell Bates Organic Food Store, NYC, Brother Joseph Sorelius, Father Rosario, Vila Manrese, Kathylynne Griff, Sylvie Tina Pierre, Fadson Felix, Sophonie Zidor, Universite d'Etat d'Haiti, Louis Smith, translator, Billy Prophet, translator, Johanne St. Pierre, Port au Prince, Haiti.

Founded in 1990, the Association for Trauma Outreach & Prevention (ATOP) partners of [Meaningfulword.com](http://Meaningfulword.com) has achieved international recognition as a leader in training humanitarian outreach professionals as well as responding to two decades of global and local disasters. ATOP is committed to global education promoting state-of-the-art scientific theory, peace and consciousness research, and the development of technical skills to train mental health professionals, teachers, psychologists, art therapists, nutritionists, alternative medicine practitioners, clergy, nurses, mediators, interfaith ministers, and lay persons committed to service. Meaningfulworld Humanitarian Outreach teams make a daily difference in people's lives helping to transform tragedy and trauma into healing through post trauma growth, guidance and meaning-making through a new world view. We have served in over 40 countries, presented over 200 papers, published over 150 articles, 4 books, and 5 films. Ask yourself ...Ask your friends...What makes your world more meaningful? Be a change agent, come get involved, or send your tax-deductible donation online: [www.Meaningfulworld.com](http://www.Meaningfulworld.com)

7.22.12

