

This summer I had the opportunity to work for eight weeks in the Central Plateau of Haiti. I spent my time on two separate but related projects. The first is called Zanmi Foto (ZF), and is a community development project using photography. The second is called the Lafonant Archive Project, and was aimed at creating a record of the recent history of the area, using photographs, and interviews with members of the community.

Zanmi Foto means Partners in Photography in Haitian Creole. For this project I worked alongside Professor Pradip Malde, Chandler Sowden (Class of 2014), and Caroline Minchew (Class of 2014). In the summer of 2013, Malde, Sowden and I conducted a photography and Community Development workshop with students from the Centre de Formation de Fritz Lafontant (CFFL), a vocational school in Corporant, Haiti. This summer we returned to expand the project with the help of four students who participated in the initial workshop. We provided additional training to the students and helped them to make contact with a total of eight families in the villages of Bois Joli and Blanchard. These eight families are all farmers, connected to the Zanmi Kafe project a Payment for Ecosystems Services program under the direction of Dr. Deborah McGrath.

Our main objective for the ZF project was to set up the infrastructure for our four partners from CFFL (Lois Aloce, Brianvil Paulverel, Joseph Monclair, Fontaine Thony) to work over the next year. They will be visiting each of the families they are working with twice a month. Their responsibilities include providing training in photographic skills to the families, bringing them prints of photos that the families have taken, and encouraging the families to share and discuss the photographs with their friends and neighbors. This project is aimed at strengthening bonds and creating resilience capacities

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within the communities. The families and students who are taking part in the project will be producing photographs over the course of the next year, which will serve as an indicator of subtle changes in their lives, perhaps due to participation in the Zanmi Kafé project, as well as other influences.

For the Lafontant Archive Project, which I completed under the direction of Professor Malde, I worked mainly with Father Fritz Lafontant. Father Lafontant is a retired Episcopal priest who has lived in the Central Plateau for decades, and has been a part of some amazing changes in his area, including working closely with the founders of Partners in Health. Over the years, he has collected thousands of photographs. One of my main goals this summer was to scan and digitally preserve as many of these photographs as possible. I also spent time interviewing Father Lafontant, using the photographs as prompts. I then worked to organize and correlate the photographs and interviews, as well translate the interviews from Haitian Creole to English, so that the information would be more accessible.

The work this summer allowed for my personal development in several areas. It gave me a greater proficiency in working with Lightroom, a software program useful in organizing and editing photographs, which was used in both projects. The Archive project also allowed me to gain experience with conducting interviews. Spending eight weeks in Haiti, as well as conducting interviews in Haitian Creole was a wonderful refresher for my language skills, and even helped to improve my Creole vocabulary.

Working on the Zanmi Foto project allowed me the opportunity to share knowledge and training that I have received since coming to Sewanee. I feel very fortunate that I got to be a part of encouraging community building and collective

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problem solving. The fact that the projects were in Haiti allowed me the chance to work cross-culturally, a very important skill. Haiti is a country with countless international development organizations and projects. My experience this summer allowed me many chances to closely observe these projects, and the people carrying them out. I feel that I learned about some of the complexities of working in this field, as well as some responsible ways to engage with the issues these organizations are working to address.

I think that there are some very important outcomes from Zanmi Foto and the Lafontant Archive Project. The participants in ZF have learned and are continuing to learn skills that will benefit them in the future. Technical skills in photography are only a part of that. The structure of the project encourages communities to come together and discuss their common experiences and concerns. It also provides them a platform from which to communicate with those outside of their community. The Archive Project provides a record of some very important changes in some of these communities, from the establishing of a public water system, to the founding of schools and clinics. For a community to think towards positive changes, they must have some understanding of what happened to create the situations in which they find themselves.

This internship has provided invaluable experience to me in terms of my career goals. It has taught me that not only do I have a passion for photography, but about the value and richness of photographs as tools for community building. I am an Anthropology major, and this summer has reaffirmed my desire to work cross-culturally. Working on the Lafontant Archive Project has also encouraged me to think of ways in which sharing stories about the past can be used with photography to build resilience capacities within communities, as well as how these capacities can aid communities in

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collective problem solving.