



ITINERANT UNIVERSITY OF RESISTANCE IN HAITI

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In the first six months of 2022, our priority focused on building women's political strength, knowledge of their rights, organizing skills, and Spanish acquisition (Spanish being essential for activists to communicate with their counterparts throughout Latin America). The women are becoming a strong cadre of land, earth, and rights defenders, as are their male counterparts. Below is a report on what we have accomplished.

Women Matter, Too Program: Our first-priority program – which our students named Women Matter, Too – now cross-cuts all our work. We are addressing three needs: (a) creating spaces – all too rare in Haiti – and tools for gender consciousness, women's strength, and leadership; (b) teaching Spanish - the language spoken in almost all countries of Latin America - to Kreyol-speaking-only women; and (c) creating access to knowledge and tools. Some advances over the past half-year include the following:

- ✓ We have hired two part-time Women Matter, Too staff, to work alongside our coordinator, and have formed a Women Matter, Too committee;
- ✓ 120 women have participated in our rural organizer trainings, and 23 women have taken our intensive train-the-trainer courses (both described below);
- ✓ In the next few months, 13 women from our program, plus three staff, will attend either the Sonia Pierre Political School for decolonial feminist skills-training and cross-border strategy-building, or an international anti-mining conference;
- ✓ We met our commitment that at least 50% of Spanish students be women. We now have 50 women students. In a country where girls and women carry an exorbitant workload in the home and family, where education is considered to be of little import for girls, and where husbands and fathers place prohibitions on females leaving the house, this is extraordinary;
- ✓ We have put together a team of women, to whom we are paying stipends, to map and investigate mining, and the damage it has caused in Haiti;
- ✓ We have created, as a popular-education tool, a domino game on women in resistance against mining. To be used throughout extraction-threatened villages, each domino imparts information on victories, challenges, and strategies;
- ✓ One member of the Women Matter, Too, committee attended a year-long International Feminist Organizing School, based on the legacy of Berta Cáceres; and
- ✓ In the next few months, thirteen women from our program, plus three staff, will attend either the Sonia Pierre Political School, for decolonial feminist skills-training and cross-border strategy-building, or an international anti-mining conference.

Spanish and Gender Justice Courses: One of the main challenges to Haitian social movements is their isolation from the world, not just historically and culturally, but also linguistically. While 100% of Haitians speak Kreyol, only 4% speak fluent French, and far

fewer speak Spanish. Spanish is *the* key variable to breaking the rupture between Haitians and the rest of the hemisphere. Our Spanish learning materials and discussions all focus on gender justice as well as climate and land defense. In the past six months, we have advanced in the following ways:

- ✓ We taught six courses of beginner and intermediate Spanish to activists from Port-au-Prince, frontline villages, and national grassroots movements. This way they may avail themselves of the vast cache of anti-mining materials, knowledge of effective paths to victory, etc., created by Latin American movements, and participate in Latin American-wide gatherings. Each class had 20 students. All use our original learning materials which focus on extraction, environmental defense, women's rights, and global political struggles;
- ✓ All our classes serve as a vehicle for strengthening women's power and voice. We use peer discussions and other tactics – all in Spanish – to draw out ideas and experiences, and to discuss strategies for creating change; and
- ✓ We are creating an intermediate Spanish workbook, to complement our beginner's workbook. This will be based on excerpts from Latin American literature.



Two of our six Spanish-language and gender-justice classes.

Train-the-Trainers and Skills-Building Workshops:

- ✓ We have co-hosted 16 all-day workshops, four each in four villages. So far, the trainings have reached 388 peasant farmers, 125 of them women. The themes are: (1) the impact of mining on women and environment; (2) agriculture adapted to climate change; (3) protection of biodiversity; and (4) first aid for communities without doctors. All the participants are from grassroots organizations;
- ✓ We have hosted four train-the-trainer workshops for youth who are creating educational materials, videos, and podcasts, and who are building their organizing and facilitation skills. So far, we have trained 54 people, of whom 23 were women. We will soon train 16

more. Each of these 70 people committed to replicate the workshop with a minimum of 10 others. Thus, if all goes well, we will finish the year having trained at least 700 people.



One of our coordinating committee members – Milosten Castin, an environmental leader, standing at left rear – running an agriculture- and climate-defense workshop.

Creation of Gender Justice, Anti-Mining, and Earth-Defense Training Materials: Over the past six months, a team of women has designed new environmental and organizing training materials for our program. The foci are: (1) what mining does to farmland, water, and the climate; and (2) effective strategies for stopping mining. The lessons are transmitted through stories of grassroots women leaders throughout history, and women’s status and possibilities in Haiti today. We are also broadening the distribution of our materials. Some results include:

- ✓ A youth group created three videos and a podcast about the threats of mining, and organizing strategies, in Spanish and Kreyol. We are using these in our classes, WhatsApp groups, and social media;
- ✓ We have widened our distribution of the “50 Questions about Mining” playing-card deck, with its wealth of political and strategic information printed on the cards. The game is used around Haiti;
- ✓ We created an audio version of the “50 Questions about Mining” card deck, to be distributed by the network of popular radio stations across Haiti;
- ✓ We have created a second card-deck teaching tool, aimed at helping grassroots groups know how to determine objectives and strategies to win their fights, garner support, etc., especially related to land theft and mining; and
- ✓ We created and are using, in our Spanish classes and community workshops, the aforementioned domino game on women in resistance.



The deck of cards we created contains information on myths told by mining corporations, mines' impact on health, victories around the Americas on environmental campaigning, and lots more.

International Exchanges: We tried to organize several cross-border events this year. Each failed because no country where we tried to meet would give visas to Haitians, and because most foreigners were scared to visit Haiti because of political and cartel violence. We continue working to organize exchanges, but only within Haiti and the neighboring Dominican Republic (which *does* give visas to Haitians), bringing in international leaders.



Here, a one-month training and exchange with the Sonia Pierre Political School in 2021, which we are repeating this year. Our coordinator, Claudia Alavez, is seated at bottom left.

International exchange plans for the remainder of 2022 include:

- ✓ The aforementioned Sonia Pierre Political School in the Dominican Republic;
- ✓ Organizing two international video conferences in lieu of two live gatherings we were forced to cancel. So far, we know that we will be joined by grassroots movements in Uruguay and Colombia.