



ITINERANT UNIVERSITY OF RESISTANCE IN HAITI MID-YEAR UPDATE TO OUR FUNDER-ALLIES JULY 3, 2020

OUR RESPONSE TO COVID-19: *Nou bite, nou pa tonbe*. We have stumbled, but we haven't fallen. We can apply this Creole expression to our work during the pandemic, in that our program has slowed to allow for maximum protection against COVID-19, but has not stopped. We were excited to realize that we could adapt our plans for the remainder of 2020 and for 2021, and continue advancing without losing anything substantive in our objectives or program, only by (a) moving most of our work online, and (b) flipping the original order of the project's components.

ADVANCES IN THE FIRST SIX MONTHS OF OUR PROGRAM

Note: The university began functioning in October, 2019. However, the coordinating committee voted to suspend the program during December, January, and February, as the country was dysfunctional due to nationwide demonstrations and government repression. We recommenced in March; thus our sixth month of operation concluded at the end of June, 2020.

- ✓ **We developed partnerships for this year with the two primary Haitian coalitions addressing land rights and the imperative to stop extraction and mega-projects.** They are:
- The Committee for Mining Justice. Far more than the 'committee' the name implies, this is a coalition of dozens of grassroots groups, mining-threatened or -impacted communities, and progressive non-profits, who have united their force to fight extraction; and
 - The Charlemagne Peralte Political School, led by the principal peasant and Left organizations in Haiti, providing broad-based political education. However, the school is currently closed due to the pandemic, so this partnership awaits activation.

Once the quarantine lifts and circulation is safe, we will enter into two more partnerships with frontline communities in the mine-pocked North.



Our first Spanish class, before we implemented social distancing.

✓ **The first Freirian-model Spanish class is well underway**, using mining and other extraction, movement philosophy, and political history as the learning texts. We have 20 students, most of them youth, from the Committee for Mining Justice. We had aimed for at least 50% participation by women; while we did not get that, 35% of the students are women which, sadly, is outstanding in gender-mixed groups in Haiti.

The class is now virtual, with each student working from home. We have been able to continue without deceleration or interruption, thanks to:

- Putting all the course materials online, with new assignments given each Monday;
- Contracting with a motorcyclist to deliver a new text book (see below) to the homes of all students;
- Holding a weekly one-on-one Spanish conversation class between the teacher and each student by WhatsApp; and
- Having the teacher available five hours every day, via both WhatsApp and email, for questions and problems with the material.

Presuming the pandemic passes before the end of the year, we will begin Spanish classes with two additional organizational partners, each with 20 students.

✓ **We created a textbook: *Exercises in Spanish for Haitian Creole Speakers*, an essential tool for continuing our classes during quarantine.** The 65-page book was written by our coordinator Claudia Alavez, an expert in teaching Spanish with a popular education pedagogy. It contains (a) exercises focused on Spanish grammar, all of them relevant to extraction and resistance to it; and (b) documents, songs, and poems, aimed at increasing Spanish comprehension as well as Latin American political knowledge.

✓ **We are gathering Spanish-language resources and information, produced by Latin American anti-extraction and land-rights organizations and networks, for translation into Creole.** Our coordinator is working with four students from the Spanish class to compile the best materials - texts, films, etc. - on anti-mining resistance from throughout Latin America. So much has been produced about victories, challenges, strategies, tactics, and advocacy, as well as local, national, and international campaigns. But Haitians cannot access any of it due to the language barrier. Once we have translated the materials, we will get them into the hands of communities in resistance.



Two students and young activists receive their just-created, extraction-focused, Spanish textbooks.

✓ **We are creating our own information and training materials, both for our own students and for the broader community.** For starters, we are now developing radio shows on mining and mega-projects, in conjunction with the national community-radio support program, SAKS. Those shows will be copied onto CDs and delivered to SAKS' local radio partners throughout the country via

a motorcycle taxi. We will also translate the shows into Spanish to circulate to Latin American community radio networks.

2021 PLANS, PANDEMIC PERMITTING

✓ **Organizing exchanges/trainings between communities, organizations, and networks with leaders of anti-extraction and land-rights movements from other countries in Latin America.**

- We plan to host four exchanges, beginning in February. The members of the coordinating committee stand ready to seek the best facilitators from within their networks and start to plan, as soon as there exist reasonable possibilities given the pandemic;
- At the end of each exchange/training, we will offer an open forum in Port-au-Prince to NGOs and grassroots organizations involved in anti-mining, land rights, and environmental struggles.

✓ **Helping Haitian organizations and networks participate as active members in more Latin American networks, and as more numerous and effective actors in the global movement against extraction.** Once the networks – such as the Mesoamerican Movement against the Extractive Mining Model (M4) - become active again, we will: assist groups in identifying what relevant Latin American networks they may want to join, use our contacts to help them integrate, and possibly fundraise so that members can attend international gatherings.

OUR STRUCTURE AND TEAM

Organizational Sponsor: Otros Mundos, San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico

Fiscal Sponsor: Alliance for Global Justice, Tucson, Arizona, US

Coordinating Committee:

- Claudia Alavez, Afro-Latino Collective, Mexico/Haiti
- Kettly Alexandre, Movement of Peasant Women of Papay, Haiti
- Beverly Bell, Institute for Policy Studies, US/Mexico
- Nixon Boumba, Popular Democratic Movement, Haiti
- Milosten Castin, Action for Reforestation and Defense of the Environment, Haiti
- Gustavo Castro, Otros Mundos, Mexico
- Deborah Etienne, US/Haiti
- Juan Houghton, Teaching for the Promotion of Political Culture, Colombia

Coordinator: Claudia Alavez

OUR FUNDER-ALLIES:

**American Jewish World Service
Anderson-Rogers Foundation
Bina's Kids Foundation**

**CarEth Foundation
Lawson Valentine Foundation
Lippincott Foundation**

GRATITUDE: Thank you for being a partner, supporter, and co-conspirator in building a more just, equitable, dignified, and environmentally sound Haiti and world. We appreciate you, your solidarity, and your generous funding.