THE PHILANTHROPY OF GEORGE SOROS

BUILDING OPEN SOCIETIES

CHUCK SUDETIC

With an Essay by
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and an Afterword by
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CHAPTER 4

Helping Haiti Rise from Destruction

Democratic decision making, a functioning free market, transparency and accountability, and respect for civil and human rights: These and all the other building blocks of an open society have no firm foundation to stand upon in countries where legions of people are so lacking in the basic necessities of life that they have little time or energy for anything beyond an immediate, vicious struggle for survival.

Haiti's people—most of them descendants of rebel slaves, many of them energetic, creative, desperate for education, and, to a fault, self-reliant—bear the scars of three centuries of social turmoil and life on the edge of existence. They have been set upon by yellow fever, syphilis, malaria, HIV, and TB, and have watched as their children died of simple diarrhea. They have endured dictatorship, police thuggery, and gang violence as well as foreign (read: United States) invasion, occupation, and economic embargo. Even today, they still endure corruption, drug-trafficking, people-trafficking, kidnapping, brain-addling malnutrition, and stomach-wrenching rates of infant mortality. They have clear-cut their forests, exhausted their fields, and over-fished their waters. Too many suffer from a misplaced faith in divination and other deep-seated superstitions as well as a dependency mentality ingrained by decades of misguided foreign aid.

Electricity lines have yet to stretch far into Haiti's hinterlands, where clean running water and indoor plumbing exist only in tales about the world outside. In hamlets inaccessible even to all-terrain vehicles, villagers, many of them barefoot children, carry everything: sloshing water jugs, sacks of rice and beans and concrete, sheaves of twelve-foot-long steel reinforcement bars, their infants, their sick and injured, and their heavily pregnant women, each patient lying upon a wooden door lifted from its hinges and borne by someone at the corners. Illiteracy is the rule. Information and rumor trickle into minds primarily via radio and gossip.

Education might—only might—be chipping away at widespread ignorance. Nearly all of Haiti's schools are private. Some are run by headmasters and headmistresses who have only a hint of education beyond the eighth grade—and all too many are substandard or outright scams defrauding the unwary.

Haiti and the daunting challenges it faces and presents caught George Soros's attention years before he established his foundations to promote open society. During the 1980s, at the Americas Watch offices in midtown Manhattan, Soros attended talks on Haiti and its ruling regime. He traveled to the country's capital, Port-au-Prince, and once stayed at the Oloffson, the decaying hotel Graham Greene made famous in *The Comedians*. Soros encountered a society atomized and traumatized by decades of repression. Haiti's former dictators, François "Papa Doc" Duvalier and his son, Jean-Claude, had banned unsanctioned gatherings and even unsanctioned discussion of local issues. Their thugs beat and killed people who dared to gripe.

The possibility of an open society arising in Haiti only existed legally from 1987, when the country's constitution was rewritten to grant Haitians the right to express and organize themselves freely. Mired in corruption, infighting, and fecklessness, Haiti's post-dictatorship government effectively abandoned impoverished

Haitians to their own devices. Thousands of them fled the country aboard rafts and fishing boats. Hundreds of thousands more managed to get no farther than the slums in and around Port-au-Prince.

In 1994, three years after remnants of Duvalier's drug-running military overthrew President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the United States landed 20,000 Marines in Haiti and returned Aristide to power. This was the moment Soros and Aryeh Neier seized to launch an open society foundation in Haiti. It would be called FOKAL, an acronym for Creole words meaning Foundation for Knowledge and Liberty.

As FOKAL's executive director, they named Michèle Pierre-Louis, a woman who, after seeing her family and close friends suffer under Duvalier, went to study in the United States and France and returned to work in a number of private- and public-sector positions before openly denouncing the 1991 military coup. Pierre-Louis recruited Lorraine Mangonès, the daughter of Haiti's most renowned architect, to oversee FOKAL's programs.

The foundation first undertook an analysis of the political, social, and economic situation in Haiti during the early post-Duvalier transition, a violent shift from a thuggish, corrupt dictatorship into a thuggish, corrupt democracy. As the foundation was beginning its work, slum gangs, armed by Aristide and other political leaders, fought pitched battles and began to kidnap and kill in order to extort money from people who managed to find paying jobs and/or start profit-making businesses. "People were crying out for change," Pierre-Louis said. "But how to bring change when people must struggle to survive? How to promote the education of children when their parents are illiterate? How to promote public discussion when so many people have no idea how to participate in a discussion?"

FOKAL's team attacked this problem on two levels. First, the programs set out to lay the groundwork for development of an

open society by enhancing the capacity of individuals. On another level, however, the programs worked to expand and strengthen social ties collectively. In its efforts to help develop free-thinking, responsible, and engaged individuals, the foundation initiated debate programs that gave young people an opportunity to sharpen their ability to reason and express themselves. It initiated a program to develop entrepreneurship among adolescents and young adults as well as a scholarship program to give young people a chance to attend universities and technical schools in Haiti.

The centerpiece of FOKAL's early efforts in education was a program to promote the spread of Tipa Tipa, or "Step by Step," a child-centered preschool program that allows children to explore a variety of individual and group activities before they enter mainstream classrooms. The foundation worked for years without success to convince Haiti's education ministry to adopt Tipa Tipa as a component of the national education curriculum, which had no preschool element. After the ministry balked, FOKAL introduced Tipa Tipa in a dozen remote rural areas where community organizations, some of them initiated by Roman Catholic and Protestant clergymen, were working to improve dire living conditions. FOKAL sponsored teacher-training programs, built schools, and, for a time, subsidized Tipa Tipa by providing classroom materials and teacher salaries.

In its efforts on the community level, FOKAL opened free libraries in Port-au-Prince as well as in remote towns and villages. This gave far-flung Haitians unprecedented access to information and ideas from the outside world and provided a space for people to gather and share their own ideas as they discussed issues affecting their lives and communities. The foundation nurtured the growth of community organizations. It sponsored arts and cultural events to bring people together and foster a sense of Haitian community.

FOKAL undertook educational programs and other projects in rural communities outside Port-au-Prince to help staunch the flow of desperately poor country folk into the capital city's slums. "We never went into communities and started from scratch," Pierre-Louis added. "We went into communities that had dynamic leadership and some funding from other sources. We always told them we would not be there forever. We wanted them to be able to continue without us, knowing very well that it would not be easy. It was difficult to find towns and villages with partners who were not clergymen; and in areas where clergymen were the only option, they were many times overbearing, even dictatorial. When you have this situation, you have a problem because the impetus for everything comes from the top down and not from the bottom up."

FOKAL remained well aware of the pitfalls of philanthropy in Haiti. There is a tendency for local people constantly to approach new foreign donors seeking funds to create new hospitals, schools, and other assets—turning on a spigot of operating funds—rather than manage existing assets and projects in ways that make them sustainable. Some foreign donors have inadvertently created incentives for philanthropic pyramid schemes by repeatedly responding to tales of woe, funding new brick-and-mortar and free-aid projects while older projects and nascent for-fee local enterprises fail because the community either neglects them, lacks the means to operate them in a sustainable manner, or will not pay for services when they can be had cost free from another foreign charity.

In an effort to enhance the likelihood that its libraries, preschools, community radio stations, and other projects would endure long enough to make development of an open society possible, FOKAL invested in small-scale, economic-development projects. "What we found was that in poor, remote communities it is impossible to invest only in education projects and expect

them to be sustainable based upon local resources," Mangonès said. "We found ourselves investing in environment, health, irrigation projects, food-processing projects, and fishing projects."

In sites like Vallue, a highland village with road access to Haiti's main coastal highway, FOKAL projects appear to have passed the sustainability test. In locations like Sainte Agnès, a hamlet four hours by foot from the nearest road, they have faltered. In sprawling, teeming Port-au-Prince, programs to create a sense of community have survived despite the hurricanes of 2008 and the earthquake of January 2010, and, so far at least, the frustration evident in a sentiment spray-painted on walls across the rubble-strewn capital: "*Bon retour Jean-Claude Duvalier.*"

* * *

Vallue stands on a swathe of mountainside overlooking a thin stretch of coastal plain. From nearby bluffs, the village's inhabitants can see Haiti's main coastal highway, the pot-holed and earthquake-ripped National Road, just a few miles away. No local road gave Vallue access to the National Road until years after the downfall of Baby Doc Duvalier in 1986. Before then, goods and supplies were transported up and down the mountain on donkey back or human head. The sick were carried down to the hospital. School students walked for hours to get to class and back; too many children dropped out after a few years without acquiring the ability to read. Everyone feared the Duvalier regime's enforcers, the *Tontons Macoutes*.

After Duvalier's fall from power, a group of locally born university graduates—including young men who had completed sociology, project-management, and economic-development degrees at colleges in Canada and France—moved home to Vallue in order to help the area's peasants found a cooperative

that would pool their assets and represent their interests. The graduates missed the life and fresh air of their mountain village and sought a peace and quiet that they found missing in larger towns and the capital city's burgeoning slums.

At first, local peasants and civic leaders spread rumors that the new Association of Peasants of Vallue was a Communist organization. These rumors dried up once the rumor-mongers found themselves benefiting from the association's work. The graduates initiated a literacy program in a small reading center, which they used to organize local people. They assembled road crews who, by chipping away at limestone with pick and shovel, began constructing Vallue's first road to the outside world. The association founded a village school. And before local funds ran out, instructors began teaching kids how to play tennis on a court marked out in a parking lot; one student went on to become Haiti's national champion. The association's membership grew into the thousands.

In 1997, one of the association's leaders visited FOKAL and inquired about establishing a library in Vallue. Before it handed off the last of its projects in Vallue eight years later, FOKAL had become the largest of the peasant association's donors and had implemented practically every program it offered. In 1998, FOKAL established a library and trained personnel to staff it. The peasants association utilized the library as a gathering place—a space for local people, many of whom who could not read, to listen to storytellers and discuss local issues. Later, FOKAL introduced Tipa Tipa to the Vallue school and joined a Canadian donor in supporting construction of a new school building. "My wife does not know how to read and write, and I cannot read a letter," said 57-year-old Emile Faustin, a peasant with six children. "But I consider myself a success, because I have sent my children to school."

In Haiti, children with disabilities do not generally receive an education. However, the success of a deaf pupil at the Vallue

school demonstrated to parents there and in other areas of the country that children with disabilities can succeed in the classroom as well as enrich school life. "Tipa Tipa's results have allowed the peasants association of Vallue to promote the high-quality education available here," said Yvon Faustin, one of the association's founders. "Our school is considered one of the best in the entire region. It is a school where everyone is involved, and the students participate in cultural activities, reforestation, and cleaning plastic and other litter in the area."

FOKAL also began awarding local high school graduates scholarships to study at universities and technical schools in Port-au-Prince. Some went off to the city to study civil engineering and returned home to build houses and buildings and improve the road; another studied accounting and came home to manage the association's books; yet another was trained in telecommunications.

The peasants association had been involved in economic-development work since its members undertook construction of the road up the mountain. The association launched an enterprise producing jarred peanut butter but had trouble filling orders because they were doing all the milling by hand; FOKAL provided support for an electric milling machine and a generator to power it. The association later received FOKAL's backing to begin production of jam and preserves from locally grown fruit, and at one time the enterprise employed fifty local people.

With FOKAL's support the peasants association obtained seedlings and planted bamboo and fruit trees to slow soil erosion, reduce the risk of catastrophic landslides, and increase production of fruits and vegetables. The association had to urge local people to protect the trees rather than cut them to clear fields for planting and to produce charcoal to sell in local markets.

FOKAL was a partner in a project that helped peasants build decent houses to replace dirt-floor shacks and allowed home

owners to rent accommodations as part of an "eco-agro-tourism" enterprise. FOKAL funded a project to pipe spring water to a village and to nearby fields once used only for millet farming; this saved the village's women and children hours of carrying water and enabled the peasants to plant two growing seasons of profitable fruits and vegetables, including tomatoes, lettuce, cabbage, pepper, and papaya.

If any of these projects were going to succeed, however, they needed constant monitoring, Pierre-Louis explained. It took months, for example, for the association to install the peanut milling machine and the generator to power it. The peasants involved in the eco-tourism project had to be informed why guests would be appalled to see the refuse from their meals dumped into an open streambed with the village's other trash. An agronomist from France, who persevered even after he recovered from a bullet wound sustained while riding his motorcycle, spent months overcoming peasant resistance to switching from millet to more profitable, though also more labor-intensive, vegetables and fruits.

FOKAL also funded the start-up of the peasants association's for-profit, self-sustaining, FM radio station. Its signal now reaches three million listeners in seven of Haiti's ten departments, including Port-au-Prince. The station devotes about 60 percent of its air time to local music. The remainder it fills with programs on education, health, environment, agriculture, children, and news.

FOKAL trained the reporters, and they produced, among other things, programs that described for listeners beyond Vallue what the peasants association had undertaken. People descended upon Vallue from all over the country to learn from the association's experience. "Today, when you say you are from Vallue, people everywhere know you are from somewhere," said Benoit Batichon, one of the radio station's staff members.

The announcer and engineer were preparing their evening broadcast at seven minutes to five on January 12, 2010. In a room above the station's studio, Batichon was leaning against a wall as his cell phone was recharging. Then the wall and floor began to shake. "*Tremblement de terre*," he said to himself. "Earthquake."

Batichon crawled under a table, waited for the initial shock to pass, then walked down the stairs and out into the parking lot where the tennis team had practiced. The quake's epicenter was a few miles north of Vallue, near the seaside town of Léogâne. Like much of nearby Carrefour and districts of Port-au-Prince, it now lay in ruins under clouds of dust.

In the initial shaking and aftershocks, some 230,000 people died, another 300,000 were injured, and a million were rendered homeless. Fifteen people died in Vallue, two of them from the radio station. Some peasants from Vallue were killed while selling vegetables in Port-au-Prince.

Vallue's school building was a total loss. Concrete posts had shattered in classroom corners designated for Tipa Tipa language and math activities. The reinforcement bars did not break, fortunately, which prevented the heavy floors and the roof from pancaking onto people inside.

The earthquake destroyed the building where the jams and preserves were being produced. It ruptured water lines in the irrigation project. In some locations, the hillsides slipped and swallowed people whole. Only the library survived intact inside the building of the radio station.

It took four days to check the integrity of the building, reenter the studio, repair damage, and return to the air. Vallue now had one of only six stations in the entire country able to transmit a signal. The station's team set up its equipment in the open air, in a space beside the parking lot/tennis court, and conveyed infor-

mation each day in a special program lasting from eight in the morning to two in the afternoon. When there was not enough sunlight to drive solar cells, they fired up a small generator. The team monitored other radio stations and broadcast information from the bulletins it had gathered.

By July 2010, preschoolers in cobalt and crimson uniforms were attending Tipa Tipa sessions in a garage-sized white relief tent at Vallue. The primary school was holding classes in attached wood-and-corrugated-metal booths erected on the parking lot as well as in the room containing the well-worn books of the library FOKAL had provided. The school building was still standing. "Demolition of the school building will be done by work crews of local men using sledge hammers and wheelbarrows," said Eglorie Bernard, a FOKAL scholarship recipient who studied civil engineering. "We are talking about a new school."

The water project, too, was still in want of repair. The peasants had returned to planting millet in areas without water for irrigation. After cleaning out its spoiled inventory and reinstalling its equipment in an undamaged building, the peasants association's jam and preserves enterprise was about to launch operations with a skeleton staff. "Once a gas burner is fixed, we will begin," said Linda René, a university graduate in food processing. "We have the fruit."

The radio station was operating in its studio, broadcasting information on how to build houses that would not collapse in an earthquake. Listeners were calling in from all over Haiti to discuss the integrity of postquake emergency housing, especially in areas exposed to storm surges and heavy rain runoff. "The country has become more fragile," Batichon explained. "And hurricane season is approaching."

* * *

Sainte Agnès is a hamlet that extends along the crest of a clear-cut mountain reachable from Port-au-Prince by a five-hour, intestine-twisting SUV drive up a bare-stone track followed by a four-hour hike over ankle-twisting rocks with edges as sharp as broken glass. Local people, including children, routinely ply the path without shoes.

The hamlet's inhabitants age quickly. Too many of them die well before their time. Here, voodoo spirits of the mind warp decision making and mar interpersonal relationships. Here, a white person attracts pleas for dollars during practically every encounter with any locals. Here, people deem it acceptable to take a woman accused of cheating in a marketplace and, without arrest or trial, whip her in public.

Many people seeking better lives migrated from Sainte Agnès to the slums of Port-au-Prince, and many of them fled home after the 2010 earthquake. Returning, they found the daily grind in Sainte Agnès so trying that most returned to the ravaged capital quickly and convinced other people to leave Sainte Agnès to begin life anew amidst the city's rubble.

Before the toppling of Jean-Claude Duvalier in 1986, the people of Sainte Agnès did not dare to gather together to discuss local problems. Neighbors would have overheard and tipped off the authorities. Police thugs would have descended upon the hamlet and beaten and led away people never to be seen again.

Even after Duvalier's fall, the hamlet's inhabitants hunkered down within their own families and faced their hardships by themselves. "Everyone was divided, family by family," said one of the residents, Aline Aritus. In August 1988, however, Aritus and a few local people organized a peasants association to represent the interests of Sainte Agnès and the broader community around the hamlet.

The group's early sessions were small and held in secrecy. In time the number of active members grew to more than five hundred. Their first success came when they helped abolish a tax (read: extortion payments) at a local farmer's market. Then they freed a man whom the authorities had falsely arrested and held in custody. This was precisely the kind of grassroots organization FOKAL was seeking as a partner to collaborate on its projects.

In 1997, representatives of the peasants association made the trek to Port-au-Prince, showed Pierre-Louis a stack of worn paper bills they had scraped together over three years, and asked for help in building a clinic and in sending a local woman to be trained as a nurse so she could administer injections, inoculate the children, take blood-pressure readings, and perform other basic medical services. People of Sainte Agnès were dying, especially malnourished children attacked by waterborne bacteria in the drinking water. The nearest clinic was hours away along the trail of sharp rock.

FOKAL helped the association acquire structural materials, corrugated metal for the roof, and solar panels and car batteries to power a refrigerator for storing vaccines. All of this was carried up the steep trail by foot. Local men built the clinic, fashioning the sun-dried brick, shaping and smoothing the joists and posts, hanging hand-made doors, and installing the metal roof. A village woman completed a nurse-training program. Locally made beds, tables, and chairs appeared, as well as a desk. Vaccines filled the refrigerator.

Next, FOKAL engaged an engineer and paid to install a plastic pipe running from deep inside a spring to reduce the bacterial count in the water Sainte Agnès's peasants rely upon for drinking and cooking. The incidence of diarrhea declined. No longer, it seemed, would healthy people have to carry the sick down the mountain on unhinged doors.

FOKAL introduced Tipa Tipa to Sainte Agnès in 2002, along with a program designed to increase the villagers' disposable income so they could, eventually, pay the teachers and school staff and the clinic's nurse. At first the school, like the clinic, was subsidized. The classrooms filled with ninety preschoolers, including twenty-five who walked two hours in the morning to come to school and two hours to go home. The six teachers, the school's director, and the nurse were paid the equivalent of about $40 each month. Parents were overjoyed. They were paying only a few dollars each year in tuition for each child.

FOKAL's project to help the villagers earn enough disposable income to fund operation of the school and clinic involved, among other things, pig farming. Pigs were distributed around the hamlet. When the females bore litters, the piglets were equally divided, so everyone would share in the cost and profit from their sale. The pigs grew large and fat. The peasants were instructed to sell the bulk of them for profit during October, when prices peaked. The market nearest to Sainte Agnès attracts buyers from the Dominican Republic. Villagers were warned that if the pigs were not sold on time, the pig population would become too large to be fed by the nearby foliage.

During the winter of 2006, after the Open Society Foundations and, subsequently, FOKAL, began withdrawing operational support from education programs, Pierre-Louis visited Sainte Agnès. "I saw that they had not sold the pigs," she said. "The people were complaining that the pigs were becoming smaller and that the prices had dropped." She asked the peasants why they had not sold the pigs in October, when prices were high. "Madame Michèle," one answered, "we will only sell the pigs when we have a problem."

In the highlands of Haiti, a world of chronic hunger and the unexpected onset of disease, people consider livestock an

insurance policy against starvation and health emergencies and other unforeseen trials. Since they had not cashed in on the excess pigs, however, the people had less disposable income than they would have accumulated. They chose not to spend what disposable income they had on their clinic or their preschool. The people of Sainte Agnès assumed someone would continue to pay for their clinic and school. They assumed wrong.

In other villages in the region, clinics opened and began providing free medical care and medicines. Rather than pooling their assets to pay the $40 monthly salary of the local nurse and rather than paying for drugs and prescriptions no matter how low their cost, the people of Saint Agnès chose to hike long distances for free medical care. They chose to buy medicines from itinerant pill mongers who wandered up the rocky trail. They chose to entrust their sick and injured to traditional healers. They chose to continue carrying their heavily pregnant women down the mountain on unhinged doors.

The nurse finally quit, because the peasants association owed her back wages. Despite numerous promises, no health official or doctor from the national government ever tried to walk the rocky trail to inspect the clinic in Sainte Agnès, so it never obtained official accreditation to qualify for government-provided generic TB and malaria drugs or for government funding to pay for a half-time nurse. At the village spigot, out in front of the clinic's yard, the flow of water slowed, and no one repaired the system.

The Tipa Tipa school closed in 2008, despite efforts by the peasants association to keep it functioning. Teachers went without pay for two years before giving up. Too few local people were willing to pay tuition for their children to attend the preschool; the tuition had doubled to only $6.25 per child annually and needed to be about $30 for the school to become solvent. Despite parental satisfaction with Tipa Tipa and excellent results shown

by children who had completed the program—coupled with less-than-spectacular results shown by children who had not—too many peasants of Sainte Agnès chose to disregard preschool education and send children to church primary schools whose tuition is only slightly less than what the Tipa Tipa preschool would have needed to break even.

By mid-2010, the Sainte Agnès clinic had been closed for at least a year. The solar panels were no longer driving the refrigerator's compressor because the batteries had died. The pupils' desks and chairs and other furnishings were waiting inside the preschool's three deserted classrooms. Spring water was trickling from the white plastic pipe. The village remains a case study in the pitfalls faced by philanthropic efforts in a land where people with few tools and opportunities are trapped in an abject struggle for survival.

* * *

Port-au-Prince was once a sleepy, seaside town. Over two centuries, its original cluster of weather-worn, wood-frame gingerbread homes, stores and warehouses, and official buildings became lost in a sprawl of cinderblock and cement, much of it crumbling.

Jean-Jacques Dessalines was the leader of the Haitian forces who, in 1803, thwarted a campaign by Napoleon Bonaparte to reimpose France's rule over its former colony and reenslave 400,000 people whom French revolutionaries had emancipated a decade earlier. Dessalines cautioned his people. He warned them not to invest their hearts in Port-au-Prince and the other towns they had occupied. These places had never belonged to the freed slaves, who had been relegated to hardscrabble villages and hamlets like today's Vallue and Sainte Agnès. The freed slaves had little sense of entitlement to their country's towns. These places had belonged to the slaveholders, the French. Dessalines warned

that the French would return to reclaim the land. He warned that it would then be necessary to resist them by burning the towns to the ground. So important was this warning to Dessalines that he enshrined his call to torch the towns—his words were: "*premier coup de canon d'alarme, les villes disparaissent et la nation est debout*"—in the final article of Haiti's first constitution.

As the 1970s passed into the 1980s, hunger forced Haitians to migrate to Port-au-Prince. The city's population, 60,000 in 1947, swelled beyond a million and continued to grow. This migration began before Haitians were free to organize themselves or to criticize their government. The new arrivals had no idea how to live in a crowded urban area. They had little time for community. Slums built on land for which most of the inhabitants still hold no title, ran southward from the city's center. Machetes began to clear-cut hillsides to free tillable land and to produce wood for building homes and making cooking charcoal. During rainstorms, torrents of runoff tore through hillside slums, transporting mud, trash, and garbage through the streets and ravines.

In the 1990s, hundreds of thousands more rural people packed into Port-au-Prince. Desperate men and women cracked open and robbed graves in its cemetery. Families squatted inside emptied tombs. After his return in 1994, Aristide worked to secure his position by dispersing arms to criminal gangs in the Port-au-Prince slums. Violence escalated throughout the country after Aristide won Haiti's presidency for a third time in a tainted election in 2000.

Throughout this turmoil, FOKAL used discretionary funds to create an island of art, music, lectures, drama, and books in the center of Port-au-Prince. The FOKAL library and culture center facilitated discussion and exchanges of ideas; artists and speakers came from abroad; painters and musicians gathered from all around Haiti. The center celebrated creativity and the best minds and talents Haiti has to offer. Its aim was to enhance

the pride Haitians feel for their homeland and each other, as it worked to spark the creation of community and dampen the overwhelming sense that Haitians were in an abject struggle for survival in which they could rely only upon themselves. Only by combating this dread might a truly open society take shape.

In October 2003, street demonstrations began against Aristide. Gangs of his supporters attacked radio stations critical of the government, including stations FOKAL had supported. Students marched through the streets of Port-au-Prince, deriding the president and demanding change. The police turned away as pro-Aristide gang members overran the university and smashed the knees of the dean with an iron bar.

By February 2004, passions in Port-au-Prince were approaching the combustion point. Rumors spread that former members of the military had crossed over from the Dominican Republic and were on the way to remove Aristide. On February 14, Aristide's police surrounded the FOKAL cultural center and offices in central Port-au-Prince. The lawlessness grew worse. Gangs fought new gun battles in the slums, including those on the hillsides glowering down into the city's last patch of virgin tropical forest. Criminals began kidnapping people rich and poor and receiving ransoms large and small. People in the slums "gathered intelligence" and then set upon neighbors who had received wages or obtained money from relatives abroad. Roads from the center of Port-au-Prince became a gauntlet of men with guns.

Aristide came under severe pressure to step down. Wild rumors circulated through the capital. People said that if Aristide were forced to leave Haiti, his gangs would burn the city, just as Dessalines had advised his followers to do two centuries earlier. It took another day before the United States withdrew its support from Aristide and got him out of the country. The violence spiked and dipped and waned only slowly. The social

fabric of the slums was in shreds. Residents of one neighborhood refused to walk through another. Women feared being raped. Businesses paid for protection. Kidnappings continued.

Such was the chaos when FOKAL launched an effort to help instill a sense of community in the slums on the city's southern edge. The project began as a neighborhood-outreach effort for the capital's first public park, Le Parc Naturel de Martissant, which occupies the city's last patch of virgin tropical forest. The property had become the possession of the state, and the government, which lacked the capacity to do the job, handed over temporary management of the park to a FOKAL project team.

How, in creating a park, can you help build a community from a mass of individuals who are literally at each other's throats? "Talk with them, and give them a place to talk with each other," answered Cécile Marotte, a French psychologist and professor of philosophy who had worked on victim-relief efforts in Haiti and Rwanda and was hired by FOKAL to oversee the outreach effort. "Here in Haiti, nobody explains anything to anybody. Everything is done by force. You are dealing with people on the margins. So to begin, you have to sell the idea of the park to the neighbors, to instill in them all a sense that they have ownership of the park, a sense of pride in the park and respect for its riches."

In the park's offices, Marotte created a meeting room where people from the slums could gather in organized groups to share their experiences, concerns, and aspirations. Marotte's assistants identified potential community leaders in the neighborhoods around the park, people who had demonstrated a willingness to help improve living conditions. Some were university students. Some couldn't read. Some were traditional healers, some voodoo priests and priestesses. Some were victims of violence, including rape, and some former gang members who had surrendered or stashed their firearms. Some ran legitimate local organizations—

political, environmental, youth, religious, social, and cultural; and some ran organizations that existed only on paper. Marotte sent each of them a written invitation to visit the park's office, to learn about Parc Martissant, and to provide their vision of how the park might best benefit the community. Perhaps none of them had ever been asked to speak openly about who they are, what they think, what they have experienced and suffered, what challenges they are facing, and how they envision the future.

After individual meetings, Marotte asked each of the potential local leaders to join her in a series of group discussions about the park. Marotte called these group sessions Espace de Parole, "Discussion Space." She structured the discussions to be an instrument for establishing lines of communication between people from neighborhoods whose gangs had been at war with one another for over a decade and whose inhabitants were terrified to speak with one another, had no opportunity to develop empathy for one another, and assumed each other to be killers, rapists, and thieves.

Since mid-2008, the discussions have taken place twice each week, noon to three on Tuesdays and Thursdays, for three weeks at a time. A new group of local participants arrives each month. Verbal abuse is not tolerated. No free meals are offered. No soft drinks or juices are served.

Marotte trained the discussions on core values she wanted the meetings, and the park itself, to promote: health, security, and citizenship. She asked, for example: What is physical hygiene? The participants would talk it over. She asked: How does a person respect the environment? How does one respect others and feel attachment to a neighborhood and community and a land? What is security? What does freedom of movement mean when people in one neighborhood are afraid to walk through another? What are the consequences of violence? What is rape? What is freedom of expression, the right to protection, and respect for the rights of

others? And what is citizenship? What are the rights and responsibilities of a citizen? What are human rights and respect for the law?

The participants' answers spoke of ambition, hope, and despair. Paulette Ligonde, the owner and director of a primary school for about fifty students, described finding dead bodies in the streets near her house. "My kids don't know what it is like in a place with trees and flowers."

Maurice Rozin walked to Espace de Parole from beyond the eastern edge of the park, where a local gang leader had won popularity and power after his armed men became vigilantes and stopped armed men from adjoining neighborhoods from raping local women. Later, the vigilantes began shaking down residents who came into money. "I saw people killed all the time in my neighborhood," he said. "The gangs from up above came down to kill people. When you live in a neighborhood, you have to keep this from happening again. The police were powerless. And you cannot fight with stones."

"I don't know what a park is," said Rozin, who was supporting a wife and two children repairing cars, working as a plumber, and assembling windows. "I've seen parks on television. A park in the neighborhood means many things. We have to make a lot of effort to protect the park. We feel special because of it. We would like Martissant to become the place it used to be, where you could listen to birds singing. When employers know these people are not criminals, they will come and invest in these people. This is our dream." Maurice Rozin's dream died a few months later, when he was gunned down near a construction site. People in the neighborhood said he died because he was forcing workers to pay him kickbacks and a rival gang leader wanted the kickbacks for himself.

Andre Wiguens, age twenty-three, went to a Catholic school and belonged to an organization that was working in conflict resolution and organizing summer outings for young people in an area

that has no electricity, no flush toilets, no easily accessible drinking water, no nearby road, no health clinic, and no school. "We teach them how to live in a city," he said. "We teach them not to throw trash. We let them know about rights and responsibilities and what it is to be a citizen. A person is a full citizen only after he understands his civic and political rights. We organize workshops on how to deal with conflict. We invite organizations fighting against each other, organizations that were involved in the conflict. We allowed them to meet. They talked and discussed conflicts going on in their neighborhoods. This contributed to maintaining peace.

"We would like people to be allowed to visit the park soon. Once people can visit the park, they will know there is something in this area promoting peace and dialog in the community. We would like the park to have a library, because there are many people who want to know more. We would like our organization to have access to the park for children to attend camp. We would like to organize conferences for people from the neighborhood. The park can bring the world here."

Pierre-Louis Alwich, thirty, was living in a family whose home stands about a football field's length away from the park. Alwich said his parents and Christian upbringing gave structure to his life. He had studied computer science and literature and went on to earn a degree in social work. The organization he and two other friends founded had thirty-five volunteers who were using drama to teach children from the area not to despair or turn to alcohol and drugs. "They take drugs and lose control of themselves and become violent," he said. "They find it acceptable to be aggressive with any young woman passing by. Now this violence is diminishing. We think that one day the issue will be eliminated. The park won't solve the problems that exist in the neighborhoods around it. And things that cause insecurity in the neighborhood are impunity and extreme misery. Food in the morning

becomes a luxury. The fact that the insecurity has decreased does not mean there are no guns. Guns are silent but they are still there." If change is to come to Haiti, he said, Haitians should lead. "This is the first time that members of the community have an opportunity to sit down with other civil society organizations to talk and see what can be done to bring change."

The earthquake of January 2010 altered the life equation of everyone that lived in the slums and neighborhoods around the park. About four hundred residents died in the disaster. Others disappeared. Many more lost legs and arms.

All of the park's landmark buildings were destroyed. The European Union and an urban development organization from France undertook projects to improve the neighborhood, but the job of community building became arguably more difficult. Gang members escaped from Port-au-Prince's jail and returned to the nearby slums. Young people seeking ways to find food were burglarizing and robbing homes. With the approach of each election season, people feared eruptions of political violence. FOKAL pressed on with its neighborhood outreach. Whether Cécile Marotte's efforts would have a lasting effect remained an open question.

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The earthquake of January 12, 2010, did more than kill and maim. It left a million people homeless. It destroyed schools, workshops, stores, warehouses, offices, and houses of worship; it brought down the seat of Haiti's government; and it exposed the fecklessness of the country's political elite. Between mid-October 2010 and the earthquake's first anniversary, a cholera epidemic claimed about three thousand lives; and enraged villagers went on a vengeance-killing spree that left more than forty voodoo priests dead. Massive fraud during national elections at the end of

2010 exhausted what was left of the Haitians' confidence in their political leadership and triggered street riots that shut down Port-au-Prince. The uncertainty did not abate with the surprise return of Jean-Claude Duvalier, or his quick arrest.

The Open Society Foundations do not provide emergency relief in response to natural disasters. But during 2010, George Soros, the Open Society Foundations, and FOKAL adjusted their activities in light of the earthquake, the cholera epidemic, and the long-term need for economic growth that will alleviate the abject poverty that has undermined Haitian society for too long.

In addition to FOKAL's microdevelopment efforts to enhance the sustainability of its projects, the Soros Economic Development Fund has provided loans and loan guarantees to foster economic growth in Haiti. Before the earthquake of 2010, the development fund had guaranteed up to $1 million on $2.3 million in commercial bank loans. After the disaster, the development fund provided a $3 million loan to CODEVI, Haiti's only fully operational free trade zone, which is wholly owned by Grupo M, a privately held manufacturer producing knits and woven products for the U.S. market. "The apparel manufacturing lines located at CODEVI are best positioned to take advantage of the HOPE II Act, which expands trade preferences to Haiti's textile industry while creating jobs in a city outside of the capital," said Neal DeLaurentis, the fund's vice president. This garment manufacturing investment was expected to create 1,400 new jobs for low-income Haitians in 2011. The fund also provided a combined debt and equity investment of $2.3 million that enabled JMB, one of Haiti's largest exporters of the Madame Francis variety of mango, to export frozen mango chunks; this investment is designed to increase the incomes of small-scale farmers, because mangos that would have been rejected as fresh produce can now be frozen and exported.

FOKAL undertook efforts to provide public and professional input into the government's planning for the reconstruction of Port-au-Prince, Léogâne, and the other earthquake-damaged areas. While waiting, and waiting, for the government to decide what it would do, however, FOKAL launched a program to stimulate restoration of some of the city's most precious historical landmarks, its array of colorful, wood-frame gingerbread houses, by helping to organize the owners of these structures and by working with the Ministry of Culture to have a neighborhood of these houses listed on an international watch list of world monuments. Together with the World Monuments Fund, the Prince Klaus Foundation of The Netherlands, and other foundations, FOKAL completed an inventory of the gingerbread houses and worked to establish a loan mechanism to help their owners rehabilitate them. The project included a school for artisans, so local skilled craftsmen, and not foreigners, can do the restoration work and undertake gingerbread house construction elsewhere.

FOKAL also sought to play a role in the coordination of the participation of foreign institutions of higher education in postearthquake Haiti in four areas: distance learning, technical support in university administration, the building of laboratories, including computer labs, and student and teacher exchanges.

The Open Society Foundations also invested more than $2 million and partnered with one of the world's most innovative schools of agronomy, EARTH University in Costa Rica, in an attempt to make a significant contribution to helping Haiti feed itself in a sustainable way in the future. The Foundations and EARTH joined forces to provide full scholarships and travel and living expenses for young Haitians—as well as students from three other hard-pressed countries, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and

Mozambique. In early 2011, as increasing food prices were contributing to social unrest around the Arab world, ten Haitians were studying at EARTH's modern campus on a former banana plantation carved out of a rainforest. The students, who must, as part of their studies, perform community service with poverty-stricken peasants, prepare entrepreneurial projects, and undertake internships and study abroad, were learning how to use simple techniques to produce cooking fuel from animal manure, to raise fresh vegetables in urban gardens, and to prevent soil exhaustion and depletion, all of which can help Haiti overcome decades of clear-cutting forests, soil erosion, and counter-productive farming methods, that have blighted huge swathes of the country. EARTH provides its four hundred students, almost half of them women, with tutoring support, close professor-student contact, Spanish- and English-language training, and an extraordinary degree of practical, hands-on instruction, including work in the fields. A significant percentage of its graduates return to their countries of origin. Almost 96 percent of the university's graduates are employed or pursuing advanced degrees, 10 percent have their own business, and another 7 percent are working for family enterprises.

One of the Haitian scholarship winners at EARTH, Carena Théodore, lost a sister in the collapse of a building during the earthquake. Théodore grew interested in agriculture during visits to the small farm of her grandmother, who grows sugar cane, mangos, avocados, yams, bananas, and plantains. "My grandmother lives in poverty," Théodore said. "Not extreme poverty, but basic poverty. The soil is depleted.

"I will go back and train my grandmother in how not just to take out, but to add natural fertilizers. I expect she will be able to train all the farmers in her village. There are sufficient animal waste and materials for compost to improve the soil. But the

people are not taking advantage of them. The people need someone to guide them to take advantage of these techniques.

"Haiti is my country. It is my land. I won't change my story for this new place. Everything for me is in my country."

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GEORGE SOROS

If you look at where we are spending most of our money—Liberia, Sierra Leone, Haiti, the Congo, and, more recently, Guinea—they are failed states, dysfunctional countries, and countries emerging from civil war. Perhaps my attraction to insolvable problems has led us to work with failed states.

In Haiti, we established a foundation for the benefit of the people after the United States sent troops to the country in 1994 to restore constitutional rule. We found Michèle Pierre-Louis to lead the foundation. She has been an island of honesty and reliability and good administration in a dysfunctional country. I often wondered whether we should continue working in Haiti because the situation wasn't getting better. I only stuck it out because of the people who were devoting their lives to improving conditions—and also risking and sometimes losing their lives. I felt that as long as they see some hope, I can't abandon them, and that's really why we have stayed there.

There was one real moment of hope. Michèle became prime minister in 2008. The United States passed legislation that gave Haiti preferential access to the U.S. market. Former President Clinton invested time and energy in helping Haiti. Paul Collier prepared a promising economic plan, and we were willing to invest in projects through the Soros Economic Development Fund. All the stars were aligned. Then, in the fall of 2009, President Préval pulled the rug out from under the whole effort by sacking Michèle because she was too honest and refused to go

along with the corrupt practices of Préval's party. Shortly after that the earthquake happened.

I first went to Haiti some forty years ago. I went back once or twice to visit the foundation, and I went with Hillary Clinton when she visited Haiti in the mid-1990s. Each time the country had deteriorated further. The last time I went was after the hurricane when Michèle became prime minister. We flew around in a helicopter and saw the most fertile land under water as a result of the hurricane. I thought you can't go any further in terms of destruction, and then came the earthquake. It's just incredible how far conditions can deteriorate in the absence of good government. We have still not given up, although I must confess I found the sacking of Michèle Pierre-Louis profoundly discouraging.

Liberia was another hopeless case we got involved in. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the former chair of our West African foundation, became president of Liberia. We knew she was very capable and honest, so we went out of our way to help her succeed. I figured that since the country was relatively small and now had a capable leader, it should be possible to make a big impact and bring about real change.

This turned out to be a false concept because everything had been destroyed, the human capital as well as the infrastructure. It was extremely difficult to get anything done. Our first effort was a capacity-building fund, which enabled her to bring back a few qualified people to form the core of a cabinet. We also invested large amounts of money to help get the education system started.

It remains very questionable whether these investments will actually pay off. The situation may be irreversible. Former child soldiers roam the streets, and though calm prevails while the UN peacekeepers are there, they are not going to be there forever. If development doesn't reach the point where the former child soldiers are gainfully occupied, you could have a new wave of civil war. According to Paul Collier, the most reliable predictor of civil war is a civil war in the past.

I feel a great sense of urgency to make progress now. We have put a lot of effort into making Ellen Johnson Sirleaf successful, but we cannot be involved in helping her to get reelected; that would violate our principle of allowing democracy to take its course.

The Open Society Foundations are engaged in Sierra Leone as well. The human capital in Sierra Leone had been better preserved than in Liberia. The ruling class in Liberia had connections to the United States. When Charles Taylor pushed them out, most of them went to the U.S., leaving very few educated people in Liberia. In Sierra Leone, by contrast, the people had nowhere to go, so they were still there when democratic elections were held and a decent president was elected. He could quickly appoint a cabinet and make the country functional: In my view, this is why Sierra Leone has developed much faster than Liberia.

Our latest engagement is in Guinea. This country has never seen a democratic government. The recent elections were preceded by a massacre in which several hundred civilians were killed by mercenaries recruited from former child soldiers in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The new president is Alpha Condé, an émigré returning from Paris. Although the elections were controversial, he checks out well. He is determined to break the stranglehold of corruption, and I intend to pull out all the stops to help him succeed. We can benefit from our past experience and do better this time. Guinea is rich in natural resources and the Revenue Watch Institute is well situated to help the new administration to renegotiate the contracts that had been obtained through bribery. Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone are contiguous. The three countries, together with other democratic states, could transform ECOWAS, the Economic Community of West African States, into a region of good governance.