**Auguste Abel – My Life in Haiti**

(English translation by Sharon Gaskell)

**A brief history of my life.**

“My name is Auguste Abel. I was born 7 March 1975 in the commune of Montoganize. My parents were born in the countryside. They never went to school. I have 2 brothers and 5 sisters. My dad left before I was one month old. An uncle cared for me. I started at a state school when I was 11. It took 2 hours to walk to the village and 2 hours back. Sometimes my mother cried because I was going without food or money. However I was very happy and intelligent. I continued in school with great difficulty because my mother had no money (no economic means). At the age of 32, I completed High school (Philo) thanks to Starthrower Foundation directed by Sharon Gaskell.I have work also thanks to Starthrower Foundation. Today I have hope for my life.  To each of you I say with gratitude: Thank you for supporting this organization and helping it grow in Haiti.

**Haitian Visiting Customs**

In Haiti, there are many ways of showing respect for each other. When you visit someone’s house, entering, the first word you say is, “Honour.” The person in the house will respond, “Respect.” Then you say, “Good morning (afternoon, evening),” extend your hand in friendship, then embrace each other. This signifies union, oneness likemindedness. If no one responds “Respect”, perhaps they are not home, or busy, or have another visitor, so unable to receive you.  An example: At the end of President Aristide’s exile after the 1994 coup, in his address to the Haitian people, he began with one word: “Honour”. The entire country was listening on portable radios and it sounded as though everyone in the country responded “Respect.” (Auguste was there – he remembers this. -Sharon). Today technological advances allow some to make appointments by telephone or email. One still goes with Honour and respect.
Honour and Respect for every nation on this earth.

**Going to school in a Haitian village**

When a child lives in the countryside, it is very difficult to go to school in the village. It all depends on the distance between home and school. Rain turns the route to mud, making it very slippery. The youth are obliged to take off their shoes and carry them until they reach the village. Shoes are wiped off and put on in order to enter the school. Also there are always mountains to climb and rivers to cross. When the sun is high and there is a lot of dust, the children cover their heads with a text book (if there is no hat).  But they are happy. They always have joy in their hearts, singing, telling jokes, playing along the way. This passes the time and they arrive home quickly. “Going to school in the city is very different from going to school in the country.”

Footnote by Sharon: In his first installment, Auguste talked of starting school at age 11. He was able to do so by begging his uncle to “lend” him a small piece of land for a garden. He put himself through school by growing rice (diri), keeping a little for the family and selling the rest at local market. He rose at 3:30 am tended garden for 2 hours, then walked 2 hours to arrive at school. Like Auguste, many Haitians would rather go to school than eat.

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*Original text in Creole from Auguste*

***Ti istwa nan lavi-m***

*Mwen se Auguste Abel, m’ fet 7 mas 1975 nan komin Montòganize. Manman-m ak pap;m se moun andeyò. Yo pa te janm ale lekòl. M’ gen 2 fre ak 5 se. Papa-m te kite manman-m depi le’m te gen yon mwa fet. Se yon tonton-m kite pran swen mwen. Mwen te ale nan yon lekòl leta nan laj 11 zan. M’te konn mache 2 zed tan a pye chak jou pou’m te ale nan bouk-la. Pafwa manman-m t’ap kriye le li we; m prale lekòl san manaje, ni lajan. Men, m te byen kontan epi m te tre entelijan. Se avek anpil didikilte mwen te kontiye lekòl paske manman mwen pa te gen mwayen ekonomik. Mwen fini klas seconde gras a Starthrower Fondasyon dirije pa che Mme Sharon Gaskell, nan laj 32 ane. Mwen gen travay osi gras a Lakay Fondasyon, jodi-a m gen spwa pou-m viv. Mwen tre rekonesan pou-m di :Mesi tout moun k’ap sipote oganizasyon sa-a pou-l grandi an Ayiti.*

***Koutim Ayisyen pou Visit-la***

*An Ayiti moun-yo genyen plizye fason oubyen manye-yo viv ki montre respe yonn pou lòt. Le ou ale fe visit lakay yon moun le ou rive nan kay la premye pawòl ou di se “ONĚ” moun ki nan kay –la ap reponn “RESPĚ”. Ou di bonjou oubyen bonswa epi yonn lonje men bay lòt epi yo anbwase lòt. Sa se siy ki montre inyon antre yo. Si on pa tande pĕsòn di respect petet pa gen moun nan kay –la oubyen yo p’ap resevwa ou. Pa egzanp : Le Prezidan Jean-Bertrand Aristide te soti nan egzil nan 1994 – Le li te rive Ayiti li te di “ONĚ” pep-la te reponn “RESPĔ” . Men, konnye-a teknoloji ap avanse si ou gen possibilite ou rele nan telefon, oubyen voye yon imel pa entenĕt; la pou fe randevou.”ONĔ AK RESPĔ POU CHAK NASYON SOU LATĔ”*

***Istwa timou ki lekoy andeyò vil-yo en Ayiti****Lè yon timoun rete andeyò pou li ale lekòl nan bouk-la se ak anpil difikilte. Sa depan distans li rete-a. Lè gen lapli wout-yo gen anpil labou epi tè-a glise osi. Timoun oblije retire soulye ki nan pye-yo epi kenbe soulye-a nan men men-yo jis yo rive nan bouk-la. Yo mete soulye-a ankò pou-yo antre nan lekòl-la. Yo konn monte mòn epi janbe plizyè rivyè. Lè soley gen anpil pousye nan wout-yo, yo mete yon liv sou tet-yo (si yo pa gen chapo-a). Men timoun–yo toujou kontan. Timoun-yo toujou gen jwa nan ke-yo, yap chante, yap bay blag, yap jwe nan tout wout-la. Konsa yo rive lakay-yo vit.
“Lekòl lavil diferan lekòl andeyo”*

Auguste Abel