

# There Is **HOPE** in Haiti

*The missionary spirit is alive and well in this island nation, and the rising generation is determined to keep it that way.*



BY RICHARD M. ROMNEY

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*Editors' note: Because of political instability, all missionaries from other countries were evacuated from Haiti in 2005. Today all 67 missionaries serving in the Haiti Port-au-Prince Mission are from Haiti, and the Church is thriving here.*

**D**ieuveut Demosthène, 18, and Robenson Marcel Laroque Jean, 19, are the best of friends. And they intend to keep it that way. Forever.

“We were neighbors, and we played basketball together,” Robenson explains. “I joined the Church when I was 16, and after a while I suggested to Dieuveut that he should come too. I prayed a lot, and I persisted. Now look at him, a strong member of the Church. I’m proud of him.”

“Robenson invited me many times,” Dieuveut says, “and over time I accepted. He has always spoken with superb words, like he understands everything. So his invitation wasn’t worrisome; it was extraordinary. After a while I started having lessons with the missionaries, and I joined the Church when I was 17.”

### The Ideal

That’s the ideal way for missionary work to be done—friends sharing the gospel with



friends and giving referrals to the missionaries to teach them. “From me—one person in the Church—now we are two, and we continue the same work together,” Robenson says. As a result of their efforts, one of Dieuveut’s big brothers and another friend have also joined the Church. One became two, and two became four.

Robenson and Dieuveut, from the Centrale Ward, Port-au-Prince Haiti North Stake, typify what is happening with missionary work in Haiti since missionaries from other countries were evacuated in 2005 because of political turmoil. The Haiti Port-au-Prince Mission has looked to itself for strength and found it. Today only Haitians serve missions in Haiti, and teens expect to serve when they come of age. Even before they’re called to full-time missions, they’re already reaching out to neighbors and friends.

“Everywhere that you see The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Haiti, you know the members are Haitians,” says Farah

*Hope is blossoming for Latter-day Saint youth like Robenson Jean, Dieuveut Demosthène, Nathalie LaGuerre, and Farah Jean-Baptiste, who believe the gospel can transform their lives as well as their country. From a hilltop in Port-au-Prince where the land was dedicated for the preaching of the gospel and throughout the nation, Latter-day Saint Haitians are sharing smiles and preparing for the future.*



**Top: The mission president and his wife chat with elders serving in the mission office. President Pierre-Nau encourages Latter-day Saint youth to begin now to share the gospel. "You are already missionaries," he says.**

**Above: President Francillon of the Port-au-Prince Haiti North Stake enjoys time with his wife and children. He says the Church blesses the youth in many ways.**

Jean-Baptiste, 18, a young woman also in the Centrale Ward. "It's a real motivation for the youth to see that we are responsible for the future of the Church here."

"The young men and young women in the Church here are motivated to follow the Savior," says Farah's 17-year-old friend from the same ward, Nathalie LaGuerre. "We wish to walk in His path, to see His work advance. And so we are filled with joy when we see Haitian missionaries working in Haiti. They are enthusiastic and happy, and after their missions they tell us what a good experience they had. Then they invite us to have the same experience and to start today by sharing the gospel with our friends."

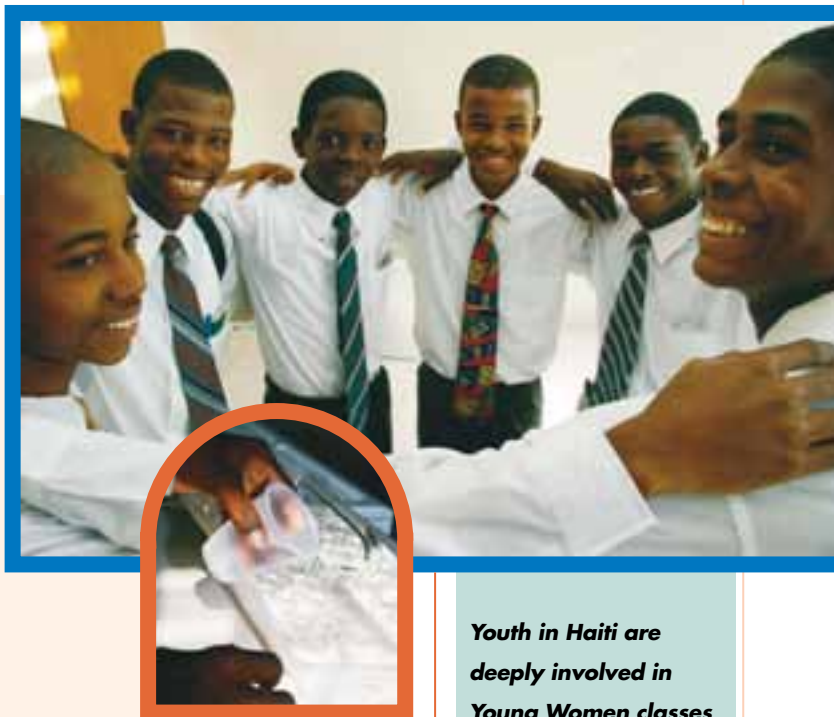
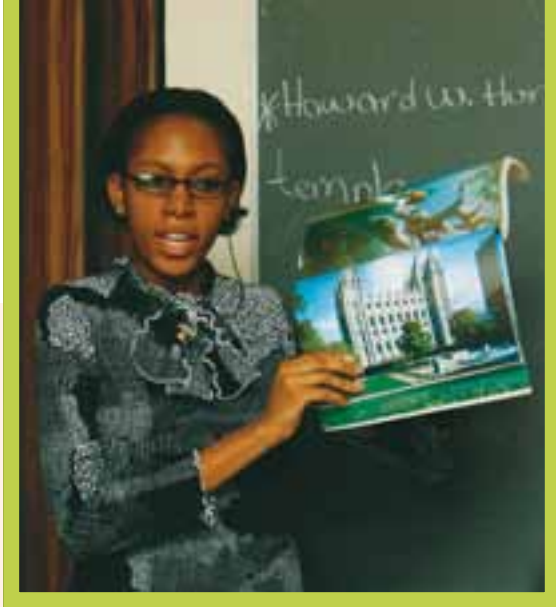
She says that although young women don't have the same priesthood obligation to serve a full-time mission as young men, "we also see that there are many blessings that come to those who serve. You are able to bless others, and it edifies you. It strengthens you for the challenges you will face in life, and it anchors you in the gospel. It shows that you are truly a disciple of Jesus Christ,

that you are a witness for Him, and that you follow His example."

### **The Hope**

"There is much hope for the kingdom of God here in Haiti," says President Gh. Ghammald Francillon of the Port-au-Prince Haiti North Stake. "The youth are truly motivated to serve missions. It is part of their natural growing up to include a mission in their priorities, even ahead of college. If you see the missionaries in the street, you only have to ask, and they will tell you they left their studies behind because they are called to the work of the Lord."

He notes the blessings he feels in his own home because his wife is a returned missionary. He says that stronger families and stronger leaders are direct results of missionary service. "Imagine," he says, "in 15 to 20 years, if so many Haitians serve missions in Haiti, the kind of Church we're going to have here!" He says members "feel the love and support of so many, from the prophet and the General Authorities and from the returned missionaries from other countries who served here in the past. But right now it is 100 percent Haitian, including the mission president, Fouchard Pierre-Nau, a returned missionary who served in Haiti about 10 years ago."



### The Future

Some people thought the Church here might have trouble without help from outside. “But I was never worried,” says a missionary currently serving in the Haiti Port-au-Prince Mission, Elder J. Henry Michel. “The Church will never fail. It is the Church of Jesus Christ, and so it can’t fail.”

Rather, Dieuveut says, as people realize the happiness the gospel brings, the Church in Haiti will keep growing. “I am truly grateful to Robenson for sharing the gospel with me,” he says, “and that’s why I want to share the gospel with others. Last week I asked myself, in the past did I know what joy was? Because today, even if I don’t have everything materially that I want, I always feel at peace with myself. I have a great hope that I will be close to my Heavenly Father.”

“I’m already trying to be a missionary,” Robenson says. “Each day I carry my backpack with several copies of the Book of Mormon in it, just to share with others. Many of them know I’m a member of the Church, and I’m eager to share my testimony. To go on a full-time mission will be a great

opportunity to serve God by serving His children. It is my great desire to go.”

Dieuveut says he often talks with returned missionaries. “They have told me how the Lord was able to bless people through the missionaries, and I would like to share in such blessings. They have told me how they lived in the mission field, how much they enjoyed it. Also, after their missions, they are worthy, good examples. I want to be like that.”

What will the future bring? “Heavenly Father has His plan for Haiti,” Dieuveut says. “He is giving members here the opportunity to become strong. It is Haitians teaching Haitians, and that will bless us.”

Robenson will soon receive his mission call, and he hopes it’s to Haiti. Dieuveut won’t be far behind and also hopes to serve in his native land. But whether they’re called to Haiti or to some other country, they know that they will make many more friends in the Church and that their own friendship will continue. Because when you’re friends in the gospel, you’re friends for eternity. ■

*Youth in Haiti are deeply involved in Young Women classes and in priesthood quorums. They not only remember the promises they made when they were baptized, but they live according to those promises every day.*

