

## **Book Proposal from Peace Brigades International (PBI)**

**Proposed title:** Nonviolent experiences in Haiti

**Proposed subtitle:** A Quest for Peace (Peace is there – we are searching for it)

### **Editors: PBI Haiti Project Committee**

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### **Contributors:**

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### **Description of contents (please consult the detailed table of content annexed):**

Peace is here, in this island with its violent past and indigent present. And yet so beautiful, so vibrant, so young - "*Haïti chérie*". Peace is here, but must be sought out, now and in the future. And isn't peace after all, the path we take to aim for it?"

This book is the account of an encounter between Peace Brigades International and Haiti, an exploration of the possibilities for addressing violent conflict in peaceful ways. Together they undertook a journey of discovery, a path walked together, the one accompanying the other. From 1993 to 2000, PBI volunteers from several countries came to live with Haiti, to see, to encounter, to share. Each had made a personal commitment to nonviolence. Together, they wanted to share the hope of peace among the Haitian people, leaving behind the clichés which lock Haiti in a freeze-frame image or folklore museum ... *zombies, Tontons Macoutes, boat*

*people, the poorest country in the Western hemisphere ...* the idea being to keep this people at a distance, avoid any real encounter or analysis, abandon it to the throes of congenital violence. In contrast, the PBI Haiti Project is laid open to our gaze, down to the last detail; unusual, yes, but uncovered, a present to all those seeking peace, to all real friends of the Haitian people.

With this book, PBI is restoring to the Haitian people the modest and yet invaluable results of this experience. With this uncompromising assessment, it clears a path, while at the same time leaving the field to Haitian artisans of peace so that they can continue to make progress in Haiti. But a commitment has been made, to share this Haitian example with all the citizens of the world who are facing violence and struggling for peace, against poverty and the economic domination of the North. In short, this is an intercultural adventure, an encounter on equal terms, away from patterns of domination, a peace to be shared...

### **Introduction:**

"Peace is there, we're searching for it." This Haitian phrase has become the guiding principle of this book. PBI's mission in Haiti (1995-2000) was involved in Haiti's own research for a possible peace, one that was already present and not yet acknowledged. A peace that was already there in spite of, or as a result of, a long history of violence in a singular culture; a peace not yet recognized on its own terrain or elsewhere and, therefore, still not very effective or beneficial, but promising all the same.

The search for peace is the best aspect of the nonviolent experience we are presenting in this book. The experience of a project which has been analysed for its interaction and its accomplishments, and which intersects with and leads to other experiences where the choice of nonviolence helps to build a lasting peace.

The idea was never to set up a turnkey project in Haiti to be conceived and run from the outside. Nor is this book a treatise on Haitian culture or the political situation there; we do not consider ourselves to be specialists on Haiti. We think that the people of Haiti who are involved in the process are better situated to know what they need in order to make headway on the path towards peace. We were there to listen to them, to be of service to them. This book is therefore above all the record of an encounter which took place, depending on the author, as direct experience or observation, from close by or from a distance.

The analysis includes three approaches:

- History and context: a presentation of PBI Haiti, its environment and evolution.
- The view from the exterior: evaluations of the project by three sociologists.
- Building peace: the fruits of this experience for Haiti, but also for all those who, the world over, are committed to working for the respect of human rights, positive conflict transformation or peace education.

The inclusion of photographs and documents in the appendix will help to give substance to this analysis. By the same token, the testimony of Haitians themselves and quotes from the volunteers illustrate and enrich several of the texts.

By way of an introduction to our experience, we've decided to share with you two letters of accreditation of the PBI Haiti project which describe its essential impact. Jan Hanssens wrote the first one on behalf of Justice and Peace Haiti, who had requested PBI's presence and who have remained up to the present day one of our main partners. The spokesperson for PBI's International Council is Liam Mahony, one of the project's pioneers.

### **Part One: History and Situation of the PBI Haiti Project**

It is not an easy task to present in a few dozen pages the essence of the thousand and one experiences, decisions, ideas and emotions undergone by dozens of PBI members and hundreds of Haitian militants. One after the other we have taken up our pen to trace the broad outline of those experiences. Gilles Danroc has contributed an overview of the phenomena of violence and nonviolence in Haiti's history. Jürgen Störk presents the unique modes of intervention and the original philosophy of action developed by PBI, then goes on to describe the Haiti Project, which was very innovative within the PBI framework for its clear orientation

towards Peace education. Marc Allenbach describes the project's evolution, like an adventure unfolding through time, with its discoveries, its disappointments, its joys and re-adjustments. "Questioning Peace Education," a synthesis of texts written by the volunteer teams in Haiti, illustrates the ideas behind the action, as it unfolded and became a notion, bit by bit, for each of the project members.

## **Part Two: The View from Outside**

Our wishes dictated our acts, but have our acts served our wishes? And did our choices, principles, and actions help us along the way? We wanted to submit our work to a detailed analysis and to critical, competent scrutiny from outside. Sabine Manigat, a Haitian intellectual who has the advantage of considerable practical experience, conducted an evaluation on the ground. On the basis of interviews with participants in various training workshops, she has been able to put together a fine overall view of the successes and limitations of our work. She then analyses and compares the testimonies of the Haitians and PBI volunteers interviewed, showing the risks and the benefits of this intercultural undertaking.

And what about the volunteer nature of the project, or the decision-making process through consensus—were these pitfalls or advantages? Ueli Mäder and Hector Schmassmann based their replies to this question on archival material and interviews with volunteers: excerpts from some of those interviews have been re-transcribed here. They illustrate both the rewarding and trying aspects of commitment to the project.

## **Part Three: BUILDING PEACE**

If it is true that with this type of work one must constantly return to the drawing board, what are the lessons which can be learned from this experience? And what are the perspectives for the future?

From Haiti, Jacques Juvigny, Ciliane Haselbach and Jocelyne Colas, three long-time friends and partners, have sent us their testimonies, their ideas, and an evaluation of their encounters with PBI. Marc Allenbach tells us how he rediscovered Haiti, when the project was about to close down, three years after his involvement as a volunteer. Gilles Danroc shares the ideas and leads which he heard all during his commitment to peace and justice in Haiti, and Christophe Barbey through his global knowledge on demilitarisation, takes our look to new horizon.

In the guise of a "conclusion" we look on the path itself we have come, in order to emphasise those discoveries which seem essential.

## **Value of the work:**

There is a steadily growing body of research and analysis of the theory and practice of peace-building and conflict transformation. This analysis of Peace Brigades International's innovative approach to nonviolent conflict transformation in Haiti, marks it out from other practical examples of peace-building and conflict transformation used to analyse the varied theoretical approaches in this field. It brings a new perspective to the international community's understanding of how best to respond to violent conflict. This book gives a thorough and critical presentation of an extraordinary intercultural experience, it is the story of five years of groundbreaking work in the field of conflict transformation in a country that just stepped out of a bloody, three year long military Coup d'Etat, with one of the harshest repression systems Latin American countries have been suffering in the past decades, in a country that is known to belong amongst the most sensible and difficult for any kind of intervention from the outside, in a country that belongs to our knowledge to those having suffered the maximum of violence that you may possibly imagine (conquest, extermination, slavery, colonialism, exploitation in its crudest form, dictatorships, structural violence,...)

The book neither speaks very much about Haiti nor in theoretical terms about peace education. It explains in the first place the process, how the peace team developed in very close communication with the Haitian partners a conflict transformation education programme that is unique and very much of interest, because successful.

There are three critical perspectives on the fieldwork of the PBI in Haiti, the view of the organisation PBI, the view of three external evaluators (sociologists) and the Haitian ones who have been requesting PBI's action and have been collaborating during years.

For two decades PBI has been modelling participatory, culturally adapted, non-interventionist approaches to nonviolent resolution of conflict. The design of its programme for nonviolent conflict resolution workshops and development of a body of Haitian nonviolence trainers was made in partnership with Haitian communities, always seeking to employ culturally sensitive and relevant tools for learning and communication, and trying to challenge traditional North-South relationships through this partnership for peace in Haiti.

### **Why the book has been written:**

The decision to close PBI's Haiti Project in 2000 was made on the basis of a thorough project evaluation by the organisation and its partners in Haiti. The broad conclusion was that PBI had –within the limits of its modest resources and its mandate - successfully fulfilled its mission in responding to the request for an international presence in Haiti. The subsequent external evaluation by Haitian expert Sabine Manigat showed that the project's contribution was to generally promote nonviolence and to specifically facilitate a long-term potential for growth in nonviolent approaches to conflict resolution in Haiti. Ernst Pierre of the Groupe de Formateurs pour la Paix (GFP) summed this up: "The seeds that you have sown have started to sprout and are now growing. Go in peace, the GFP will take over and ensure continuity.

The approach taken by PBI in this work differs from the majority of agencies working in this arena, and is one that is not sufficiently known or utilised. The purpose of writing this book is to highlight this innovative approach, to share the unique experience gained in Haiti, so that non-interventionist, culturally adapted and participatory models of conflict transformation can be further explored by researchers and practitioners alike.

How is it possible that PBI volunteers (only "ordinary citizens" volunteering for a year) were able to interest and activate so many Haitians for nonviolent conflict transformation, both action and training) reaching hereby seemingly much more tangible and long lasting results with even very, very much less resources than e.g. the Peace promotion programme implemented by the civil mission of the UN/OAS (MICIVIH) that operated with a very, very much larger budget and with highly qualified and specialised experts in conflict transformation?

The book explains in detail the approach PBI developed in Haiti and hence makes it accessible for all interested people. The will to share the rich experiences and the sometimes hard learning is also the reason why we do not just want to publish the book in French, but also in English, because the international conflict transformation community is very much (only) English speaking.

### **Why Lynne Rienner Publishers should publish this work:**

This book fits very well alongside other texts written by leading figures and organisations in the peace-building and conflict transformation field, as well as in the field of Adult Education, and on Haiti, published by Lynne Rienner Publishers.

As states seek to diversify their approaches to prevailing models of peace-building and conflict resolution (especially those that are made on the premise of armed UN or inter-governmental intervention), nonviolent civilian-led initiatives for peace and human rights are gaining greater credence in this UN Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World. The substantial practical experience of non-governmental organisations such as PBI need to be shared with those seeking to analyse and develop these new and more appropriate models. Lynne Rienner Publishers has a strong publishing record in this area and this text would make a fascinating new contribution to this body of literature.

### **Audience:**

- Peace researchers, undergraduate and postgraduate students in peace and conflict studies, and other people interested in the struggle for a culture of peace;
- Human rights, development & aid agencies working in conflict zones for positive conflict transformation;
- Governmental and inter-governmental policy makers with an interest in third party civilian initiatives for peace and human rights;
- The international network of PBI - its members and donors whose commitment made this and PBI's other projects happen;
- The large Haitian Diaspora in the United States and Canada and elsewhere abroad
- PBI's partner organisations and the communities they work with in Haiti which speak English.

### **Biographical Note:**

This book is edited by Peace Brigades International (PBI). PBI is a non-governmental organisation which protects human rights and promotes nonviolent conflict transformation. PBI works in areas of violent conflict on request of local organisations committed to nonviolent social change which are often under severe threat. PBI does not get involved in the internal affairs of these organisations, but provides teams of volunteers, backed up by a broad international network of organisations and individuals, to deter violence so that local organisations can go about their work. PBI undertakes protective accompaniment, peace education and independent observation and reporting. In 2001 PBI celebrates 20 years of having effectively employed these methods in Guatemala, El Salvador, Sri Lanka, Haiti, Colombia, North America, Indonesia/East Timor and Mexico.

PBI publishes regular field reports and newsletters, and has two documentary videos of its work. This will be the first book edited under the name of Peace Brigades International, although PBI activists have previously published articles and books under their own names, making reference to PBI. In particular, the book *Unarmed Bodyguards: International Accompaniment for the Protection of Human Rights*, by Liam Mahony and Luis Enrique Eguren (Kumarian Press, 1997, ISBN: 1-56549-068-1 ) offered an in-depth analysis of another core area of PBI's work through its creation and use of protective accompaniment -the innovative tool developed by PBI and increasingly used in conflict zones for the protection of human rights defenders and internally displaced communities. It received glowing reviews from notable figures in the peace and conflict arena, such as Dr. Kevin Clements (Secretary General of International Alert, and former Director of the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University): "*This book is a masterly empirical and theoretical explanation of the power of nonviolent protective accompaniment as a technique for generating safe political action spaces in situations of tyrannical or arbitrary rule. It is a vital source for conflict resolution practitioners, human rights activists, and students of political science.*"