

NCR featured Haitian women's group decimated by quake

Thomas C. Fox | Jan. 19, 2010 NCR Today

I just received this email from Beverly Bell, author of the *NCR* series, "Women: Birthing justice, birthing hope," which you have been seeing in the paper and on the web these past weeks.

You might recall that [one of the women's profiles we published in December](#) [1] featured Haitian activist, Helia Lejeunesse, who has dedicated her life to fighting modern slavery.

Here is what Bell wrote me:

Greetings, Tom. I just learned that Helia Lajeunesse is alive, though the conditions on which she and other members of her anti-slavery group are living are very precarious. I have a note from her colleague in Commission of Women Victim-to-Victim. I wonder if you would want to update your readers who care about her through her beautiful words? I'm taking the liberty of sending it on, here:

We have received news that Helia Lajeunesse, whose testimony about fighting slavery in Haiti *National Catholic Reporter* ran last month (Beverly Bell, "A former slave fights slavery," survived the earthquake. Three hundred members of her grassroots organization are known to be dead, and many more are missing. Hundreds of their children are dead, as well. Here is a letter that a member of her group Commission of Women Victim-to-Victim sent to me:

We are happy to get your message from which we can feel that you are thinking of us and the women of the Commission. The majority of women of the Commission are victims to the catastrophe. Their houses are destroyed and they've lost all they had. Right now many of the women are sleeping in Champs de Mars (a downtown boulevard) in terrible conditions, with the sun beating down on them, with rain wetting them. Many of them have lost their families. They were already people who had nothing, now hunger is ready to kill them. If you take me and Malya, we are left on Champs de Mars with 13 children in our hands staying under an awning, without anything. Our houses are destroyed with everything that was in them, and we have lost many of our family members. The Commission's office was destroyed along with everything we had in it. We have people who died in the office. According to our research, we have about 300 victims, but there are still certain areas we haven't been able to go in to see how the situation is there. If there is not some intervention soon for those who are still alive, the situation will get a lot worse. The women must urgently get medical care, food, clothing, sandals. There are some who want to go back to the regions they're from but they can't find transportation. To conclude we'll tell you that even our school was hit, we have many dead children.

Thanks, Tom. I've learned that many nuns have perished; trying to get details.

Of course, many of people from every sector have perished, but I know you have a heart for those wonderful nuns.

Best,
Bev

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Links:

[1] <http://ncronline.org/news/women/former-slave-fights-slavery>