



Update from Santo Domingo

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That's Just Not Right!

Dear Friends,

Have you ever seen or read about a situation where your first reaction was "that's just not right! Things shouldn't be this way!" We all have, at one time or another. Here is a story I heard recently:

About three years ago CRWRC partner DesCo started forming a justice network with volunteers from seven participating communities from La Romana in the Dominican Republic (DR). Participants learned about human rights, constitutional rights, and labor law. Recently the group started learning about sexual harassment and rape as well as abuse prevention for boys and girls. The hope is to be proactive in reducing these problems in the communities.

Three members of the network, Belkis Jean, Dilcia Jean, and Marta Juan, all live with a very real injustice themselves. These young women, leaders in the youth group in the local Christian Reformed Church from La Gina, are neither citizens here nor in Haiti, a

situation that many other people of Haitian descent born in the DR face. Why? Their parents were illegal immigrants from Haiti, and the Dominican constitution requires that at least one parent needs to be Dominican for their children to be legal, even if they were born on Dominican soil. Belkis, Dilcia, and Marta were told that their birth certificates, which they need to finish high school or enroll in the university, were invalid; that they needed to get Haitian documents and apply for residency. Unfortunately all this costs lots of time, energy, and money. It just won't happen.

Where does this leave these young women? In a legal limbo, really! They can't vote in elections. They can't enroll in the educational system in the country. They can't open a bank account or cash a check in



their own name. They can't travel legally outside of the country. The interesting thing is that Belkis, Dilcia, and Marta are not bitter. Far from it! Even though life has stacked the deck against them, they are full of energy and joy. They continue to learn more and use what they learn to help their neighbors and friends; all part of what community transformation is all about.

Pray for us and the work CRWRC supports here in the DR. Make CRWRC the favorite cause you support.

Joel Zwier



Family Update

On a personal note, Patti and I celebrated our 30th wedding anniversary in May. The permanence of our relationship continues to provide Patti a solid base from which she counsels hurting couples.

Our son David won a speech contest at Goshen College this spring. The title of his speech was "Facing food waste: The truth about what we don't eat." Even better, his involvement in building a waste food composter led to a summer job.