

# LOUNE VIAUD

---

Loune Viaud, Director of Operations and Strategic Planning at Zanmi Lasante (Partners in Health—Haiti), has worked with Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights since 2002, when she received the RFK Human Rights Award. Loune was recognized for her innovative human rights-based approach to establishing health care systems in Haiti. Loune was honored, not only for her groundbreaking work in effective, rights-based HIV/AIDS treatment, but for advocating health, access to medicine, and clean water as fundamental human rights, and working with the local government and citizens to build the government's capacity to respond to those rights.

In collaboration with RFK Human Rights, Loune has worked to transform the international community's interventions in Haiti, many of which undermine human rights, including the rights to health, water and food. Loune's primary concern has been the interrupted flow of international donor assistance and loan funds into Haiti that have undermined the Haitian government's ability to fulfill its human rights obligations. Although the Haitian Constitution guarantees the right to health and education, ineffective and poorly coordinated international assistance meant that the government of Haiti lacked the resources to deliver basic services such as education and health care. Accordingly, the advocacy of Loune and RFK Human Rights focuses on promoting accountability for the human rights obligations of international interveners in Haiti.

Loune's ongoing work in Haiti took on even greater urgency when Haiti was hit by a devastating earthquake in January 2010. Loune has since been working to provide health care to the most vulnerable populations and to strengthen the health care sector. Loune also worked with the government and other organizations to help establish a children's shelter for orphaned and abandoned children, many of whom are disabled. She has testified before the U.S. Congress on the urgent need to strengthen the capacity of the government of Haiti following the earthquake and to effectively include Haitians in the reconstruction.



Maggie Steber

---

“CHILDREN IN HAITI, PARTICULARLY HOMELESS, DISABLED, AND ORPHANED CHILDREN, STILL DESPERATELY NEED SHELTER, CARE, AND PROTECTION. WE MUST MAKE SURE THAT THEIR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS ARE PROTECTED, AND THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF HAITI IS EMPOWERED TO FULFILL THESE RIGHTS.”

---

REMARKS BY LOUNE VIAUD: 2002 RFK HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD CEREMONY, NOVEMBER 20, 2002

I am grateful to the Kennedy family for this prestigious recognition and thankful to the staff of the RFK Memorial for all their hard work in getting the ceremony together. I also want to thank the staff of Partners in Health, and the Haiti Solidarity group for helping to organize this week's events.

There are many reasons for me to feel privileged today. In the 21st century, the task of "representation" cannot be taken lightly. Who among us can claim to speak for the poor or for those who have their rights abused? As honored as I am to receive this distinguished prize, I do not claim to speak for all those fighting for human rights. What I can say with confidence, however, is that I represent a group of people, many of them Haitians and many of them not, who are fighting for the rights of the poor merely to survive. This is our human rights struggle, a struggle we believe to be neglected by many, even some within the human rights community.

Do the sick deserve the right to health care? Do the naked deserve the right to clothing? Do the homeless deserve the right to shelter? Do the illiterate deserve the right to education?

The group I represent is Haitian, American, Russian, Mexican, and Peruvian. It is the family that constitutes Partners In Health, the group I have served and helped to build for all of my adult life. We all believe the answer to each of these questions is a resounding YES.

Martin Luther King is credited with saying that "of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health is the most shocking and the most inhumane."

The struggle for health and human rights is only part of our struggle, because we believe that the poor must be respected when they say, as they so often do, "we want to see health, education, and welfare (including water) as our birthrights." These basic social and economic rights must be part of being human.

As a Haitian woman who has seen first-hand what it means to be poor and sick, I know that we can all do better. We can move from the way things are, where the bottom billion is merely struggling not to suffer, to be as we say in Haiti, *kapab pa soufri*, to a place in which *tout moun se moun*. Everyone is a person. We are all human.

For the RFK Foundation to choose me, a humble footsoldier in the struggle for health and human rights, as the recipient of this prestigious award means more than I can say. For I am a Haitian, and the Haitian people have always stood for equality. From 1791, when we fought against slavery to become the world's first independent republic born of a slave revolt, until 1986, when we began to cast down a brutal family dictatorship, we Haitians have always struggled against long odds. In 1990, when we again declared as a people our belief in social and economic rights as a human rights platform, some understood our message but many did not. Two hundred years of struggle, much of it in isolation even from those who profess a belief in human rights. It has often felt lonely.

Thank you for reminding us that we are never, in fact, really alone. I could not finish without singling out a person in the audience, my hero: Tom White! In many ways, Tom is responsible for what's happening in Cange, the village represented here today. In fact, Tom is responsible for me being here. For, how can we heal the sick and clothe the naked without moving resources from those who have so much to those who have so little? Tom's checkbook is always available to us for sending a patient to Boston for surgery, for building a school or a water project, for buying medicines for our tuberculosis and HIV patients. I would ask if you could please join me in applauding Tom White. Tom, you mean a lot to the poor of Haiti.

Someone else could not make it today, my other hero, Paul Farmer. Paul, wherever you are, you are here with us in our heart. We love you, champion of the poor!

Last but not the least, I want to mention the refugees' situation. It was with great sadness that I read last week about the plight of the over 200 Haitian refugees. Haitians who come to the United States should be treated fairly and equally. That they are singled out for such treatment is inhumane. It's almost as inhumane as the aid embargo against my country. Over the centuries there have been refugees from Haiti for many years, those fleeing slavery, war, dictatorships. In recent years, as Senator Kennedy noted, the U.S. administration has blocked even development and humanitarian assistance to my people.

The sanctions have been imposed upon Haiti primarily because the United States and the Organization of the American States deemed the May 2000 parliamentary elections to be inadequate. Many countries who do not even try to emerge as a democracy, as we struggle to do, are not punished by such embargoes. We now have refugees as a result of the sanctions.

Allow me to express our gratitude to the Kennedy family, which has always sided with the Haitian people in our struggle for democracy. We need friends in this city in order to take on the root causes of much of our recent suffering.

My country has the highest HIV prevalence rate in the Western Hemisphere. Not only do these sanctions deny Haitians their fundamental human right to health, but it also denies many their right to life.

The International Development Bank (IDB) has withheld loans to Haiti totaling \$146 million for health care, clean water, basic education and rural road rehabilitation. By continuing its policy to not release these funds the IDB is violating, not only its own Charter, but also the human rights of the Haitian people.

Robert F. Kennedy once said: "*the obligation of free men is to use their opportunities to improve the welfare of their fellow human beings.*" If RFK was alive, he would help the Haitian people to improve their lives.

# HEALTH CARE AND POTABLE WATER

## LOUNE VIAUD

LESSON GRADE LEVEL: 6–12  
HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES: HEALTH CARE AND POTABLE WATER

### UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS:

- **Article 25:** Right to Adequate Living Standard

**TIME REQUIREMENT:** 80 minutes

### OBJECTIVES:

After this lesson, students will be able to:

- Connect the study of human rights in the past to the work of Loune Viaud.
- Understand the widespread lack of clean drinking water and health care in the world today, especially in Haiti.
- Be aware that ordinary citizens have made a difference fighting those abuses.
- Encourage our students to also become human rights defenders.

### COMMON CORE LEARNING STANDARDS:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.9
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.7
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.9
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.9

### VOCABULARY:

- **Defender**
- **Human rights**
- **Water-borne diseases**
- **Haiti**
- **Health care worker**
- **HIV-AIDS**

### CONCEPTS:

- **Human rights**
- **Global citizenship**
- **Justice**
- **Government**
- **Power**
- **Individual responsibility**

### TECHNOLOGY REQUIRED:

- An LCD projector
- Five or six laptops around the classroom, or a computer lab

### MATERIALS:

- Loune’s biography and RFK Human Rights Award speech: [www.rfkhumanrights.org/](http://www.rfkhumanrights.org/) click on **Speak Truth to Power / click on “Defenders” tab**
- A five-gallon plastic jug
- Photo of Jane Addams: <https://www.swarthmore.edu/library/peace/Exhibits/janeaddams/addams.htm>
- MIT safe water project: [http://web.mit.edu/watsan/meng\\_haiti.html](http://web.mit.edu/watsan/meng_haiti.html)
- Children in Haiti collecting water: [http://www.google.com/images?q=potos+of+children+in+Haiti+collecting+water&rls=com.microsoft:en-us:IE-SearchBox&oe=UTF-8&rlz=117RNWE\\_en&um=1&ie=UTF-8&source=univ&ei=BBaSTKbeJMaNnQfG4oTdBw&sa=X&oi=image\\_result\\_group&ct=title&resnum=1&ved=0CCcQsAQwAA](http://www.google.com/images?q=potos+of+children+in+Haiti+collecting+water&rls=com.microsoft:en-us:IE-SearchBox&oe=UTF-8&rlz=117RNWE_en&um=1&ie=UTF-8&source=univ&ei=BBaSTKbeJMaNnQfG4oTdBw&sa=X&oi=image_result_group&ct=title&resnum=1&ved=0CCcQsAQwAA)
- Video of the problems of getting potable water in Haiti produced by Partners in Health: [http://www.livestream.com/global\\_health\\_equity/video?clipId=flv\\_c2a52f39-b039-4f33-adf9-0f3ecd52169d&utm\\_source=lsplayer&utm\\_medium=ui-content&utm\\_campaign=global\\_health\\_equity&utm\\_content=global\\_health\\_equity](http://www.livestream.com/global_health_equity/video?clipId=flv_c2a52f39-b039-4f33-adf9-0f3ecd52169d&utm_source=lsplayer&utm_medium=ui-content&utm_campaign=global_health_equity&utm_content=global_health_equity)
- Article “Woman of the Year” by Jennifer Margulis, Ms. Magazine, Winter 2003: [http://www.msmagazine.com/dec03/woty2003\\_lviaud.asp](http://www.msmagazine.com/dec03/woty2003_lviaud.asp)

## STUDENT ACTIVITIES

---

### ANTICIPATORY SET:

- Show the class photos of Haitian children getting water: [https://www.google.com/search?um=1&rls=com.microsoft:en-%2Bus:IE%2B-SearchBox&tbm=isch&q=photos+of+children+in+Haiti+collecting+water&spell=1&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwifqfuS\\_-LYAhXDdN8KHRAVAdkQvwUIPCgA&biw=1032&bih=625&dpr=2](https://www.google.com/search?um=1&rls=com.microsoft:en-%2Bus:IE%2B-SearchBox&tbm=isch&q=photos+of+children+in+Haiti+collecting+water&spell=1&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwifqfuS_-LYAhXDdN8KHRAVAdkQvwUIPCgA&biw=1032&bih=625&dpr=2)
- After showing these pictures, have a similar five-gallon jug filled with water at the front of class.
- Have each student stand up and pass the container to another student. Doing so is difficult, and some of the students will find it challenging, which is exactly the point!
- After completing this activity, ask the students the following questions:
  - Why would it be difficult to carry your own water like that?
  - How did it make you feel?
- Ask one student to take a paper cup and walk to the nearest supply of clean drinking water. (Tell the student she or he will be timed, but should walk at a regular pace, and *not* to run, as there is no rush.) In most situations, the student will return from a nearby drinking fountain in less than a minute. Ask the students:
  - Because you have such great access to clean water, what can you do that students in Haiti cannot? It is estimated that some children in the world carry water between 10–20 hours a week.
  - What else could or should they be doing with that time instead?
- Point out that in Haiti thousands of people get their water in plastic jugs. In addition to the physical hardship that goes with that, hundreds of Haitian children die each year from water-borne diseases like diarrhea, typhoid and cholera.
  - Show the video of these hardships:  
[http://original.livestream.com/global\\_health\\_equity/video?clipId=flv\\_f0cf321d-31b1-4e54-b146-9cfa863c1d55&utm\\_source=library&utm\\_medium=ui-thumb](http://original.livestream.com/global_health_equity/video?clipId=flv_f0cf321d-31b1-4e54-b146-9cfa863c1d55&utm_source=library&utm_medium=ui-thumb)

### ACTIVITY 1:

- Distribute to students the article entitled “Woman of the Year 2003,” by Jennifer Margulis:  
[http://www.msmagazine.com/dec03/woty2003\\_lviaud.asp](http://www.msmagazine.com/dec03/woty2003_lviaud.asp)
- Instruct students to read the article. The information will be used in the second activity.

### ACTIVITY 2:

- Using several laptops around the classroom in learning station format—or in a computer lab—transition from the reading on Loune Viaud by showing the class that students around the country have followed in her footsteps by becoming human rights defenders for Haiti.
- Working in small groups or on their own, students will read/watch the following articles and/or videos. Students should view the videos and read the articles, keeping in mind the following questions:
  - How have schools around the country been defenders for Haiti?
  - What can we learn from Viaud’s example?
- <http://cafodbrentwood.wordpress.com/2010/08/11/hef-haiti-earthquake-fundraisers-at-st-francis-school-braintree-send-875-13/>
- <http://www.pioneerlocal.com/highlandpark/news/2563102,highland-park-bike4hope-080510-s1.article>
- <http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=J6S2-z-GqiY>
- <http://berkeleydailyplanet.com/issue/2010-01-28/article/34537?headline=Berkeley-High-Students-Raise-10-000-for-Haiti-Relief-By-Riya-Bhattacharjee>
- [http://www.gazette.net/stories/01212010/clinnew182204\\_32548.php](http://www.gazette.net/stories/01212010/clinnew182204_32548.php)

### ACTIVITY 3:

- Once those basics are established, have students read an excerpt on Loune Viaud, as taken from her 2002 acceptance speech for the RFK Human Rights award in Washington.
- Following the example of Martin Luther King, Jr., students should write a one-sided version of their own “I have a Dream” speech, similar to the one of Loune that was just read in class.
- Students could share some of their work the next day, or make a video which supports their speech with pictures and images.

## INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK

Since the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) by the United Nations (UN) in 1948, many other international documents—also called treaties, covenants, resolutions, or conventions—have been drafted to develop these rights further. Countries commit to protect the rights recognized in these treaties by ‘ratifying’ them and sometimes a specific institution is created within the UN to monitor their compliance.

Here are examples of relevant international documents:

### INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

- **Article 1:** Right to self-determination of all peoples
- **Article 2:** Obligation of non-discrimination
- **Article 9:** Right to social security and social assistance
- **Article 11:** Right to an adequate standard of living
- **Article 12:** Right to the enjoyment of the highest standard of physical and mental health
- **Article 13:** Right to education

### INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

### CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

### CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

### CONVENTION RELATING TO THE STATUS OF REFUGEES

For more information, visit the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights’ website: [www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org)

## BECOME A DEFENDER

Loune Viaud chose to devote her life to helping the poor of Haiti. Perhaps students could become defenders by taking part in one of the following activities:

- Use the examples this lesson described to help you plan a fundraiser for Haiti.
- Collect bandages and mail them to Loune’s group Partners for Health in Haiti, <http://www.pih.org/pages/haiti/>

- Have a health care worker or school nurse come in to talk about the needs of your community. Ask them what help they would like to address those concerns, and how your school might be able to help.
- Talk with people in your community about their health care needs, and what their health insurance covers. Create a short video documentary on what you find.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Water for All:

<http://www.water4all.org/>

Water for All is a network of organizations that work at a local level to help increase access to safe, potable drinking water.

### Water.org:

<http://water.org/learn-about-the-water-crisis/facts/>

Water.org is a non-profit organization that works in Africa, South Asia and Central America to provide people in those areas with access to safe water.

### ZANMI LASANTE SITE BACKGROUND:

#### Partners in Health:

<https://www.pih.org/country/haiti>

An in-depth explanation of the issues facing Haiti and how they affect the health of the Haitian people.

#### Global Economic Symposium (GES):

<http://www.global-economic-symposium.org/about-the-ges>

Financing health care for the poor, the GES aims to provide a new collaborative setting to analyze the world’s most important economic problems, create shared visions of the future and formulate innovative strategies to achieve these visions.