

Soul Chronicles: It's all good...



These photos best capture what October was for me: DIVINE!!!
Taken in the mountains of Fondwa, Haiti
10/16/2013



Incidentally, this locally crafted wicker and wood counter stool is fit for a king. I wanted to take about six of these back home on the plane with me.

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Add a bit of color to your life: For this month only, all add-on color services are only \$25.00.

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Well since my last missive to fellow readers, I have been on a journey of discovery. The journey was inward as much as anything else though I did travel abroad in between. The lesson that I've learned is that when we see the world for what it is, rather than what we want it to be, it is indeed a beautiful place!! The most profound and enduring lessons of life come as a double-edged sword, slicing away the imperfections and the rough edges, to reveal the masterpiece that at the individual level is a soul realized in God's image. At the global level, the process creates a garden of healing. God is a master craftsman and we are His works of art. Come walk with me through the chronicles of *Schatzi's* soul discovery: Chapter 46. Maybe I can help you find some gems that you can take on your own soul journey...

When I last left the newsletter reader, I was preparing for a period of intense work and core deliverables. I successfully organized and executed a statewide summit which according to my perfectionist-minded supervisor was a triumph, I completed a [statewide report on health systems strengthening for cervical cancer prevention in NC](#) (the fruits of which will soon be a journal publication), and I transitioned to a new role of working towards cervical cancer prevention in Haiti—a job I consider my dream service contract number 2. *Schatzi's* naturally is service contract number 1, though the numbering is all about chronology and not hierarchy. I feel blessed to be able to serve Black women locally (through *Schatzi's*) and globally in my new capacity. It's always been about spreading love and healing. Yes, Ms. India Arie, I am a [soulbird](#). (Her concert was the bomb-diggety!) In essence, my life is charmed. I honestly work sometimes like a mad woman, but I truly give thanks. I wouldn't want to live any other way. "To whom much is given, much is expected." I AM BLESSED!! What greater gift could I give than my life in service and appreciation for the gifts that I have received? The net effect sometimes however is that I need to rest, though my muse does nudge me in the wee hours of the morning at times and beckon me to dance. ☺ (Like when I woke to write this piece.) So, I dance. It's all good as I'm usually already awake. Rest finds me when I need it.

The end of September saw me basking in the luxury of a restful retreat as I prepared my mind to embrace a new reality of life. If you're ever in the Greensboro area, check out the [Grandover](#)—the masterpiece of Greensboro's own Joseph S. Koury. I spent three luxurious nights of self-indulgence, complete with spa services and blissful walks on two separate golf courses. It was a time of private reflection, total solitude and anticipation. When one of my three room service waiters introduced himself as a Haitian national from exactly the same region of Haiti that I would be visiting in a few short weeks (Leogane), I felt that my steps had truly been divinely appointed. *Do you ever slow down long enough to notice the small signals that God sends to show you that He's watching and that He's in control?* We often discount these rich morsels as coincidence when they are in fact the yeast of life. Look, listen and feel. God is everywhere.

Soul Chronicles: Growing Up

Since then, I have switched the channel of life and have tuned into understanding a new role, a new responsibility and a new niche. That is the main reason for the delay in writing Au Naturel. I have been so narrowly focused on feeling my way through my new reality, that writing felt forced, unnatural and prescribed. I NEVER write for Au Naturel when under duress; energy can't flow under those circumstances. So I wanted for my muse and ever faithful, inspiration arises.

During the week of October 13th, I made my way to Haiti for the second time. I traveled there for the first time in 1997 around the time of Princess Diana's funeral (which I watched on Haitian television). At that time, I was living in Jamaica and was visiting the country for a short period. What I saw was a shock to my system. I recall looking out my window as I flew over-head and seeing entire mountain ranges barren of trees and foliage (see photo to right). They were brown. Coming from Jamaica and having a nature culture grounded in beautiful NC, I was shocked. The scene spelled "poverty" to me in a way that I could never have imagined without witnessing that sight. It unsettled my spirit. When I landed, the airport was much like a dust bowl. I asked why and was told, "The mountains don't have any trees to hold the topsoil in place, so wind erosion is a daily occurrence." I was horrified! As we drove throughout Port-au-Prince to conduct our meetings, I saw a level of poverty that made Jamaica truly look like paradise despite its own financial hardships. I recall quite vividly as I left Haiti, I looked back over the brown mountain ranges and I had a talk with God. To paraphrase, I said, "God, I know I studied French so that I could serve in Francophone countries like Haiti and the Congo. But God, if I never come back here, that's fine with me. I don't know what I could ever do here. The need is too great!" I was truly over-whelmed. So, I left Haiti in all honesty expecting never to return. But as the saying goes, "Never say never." God incubated me for about 16 years. Honestly, I had some growing up to do. My Caucasian co-worker told me a story which echoed a similar sentiment when I spoke with her recently. She first traveled to Haiti years ago and thought, she didn't even want to stay for the full duration of her short visit. Haiti was too depressed and too depressing. Then she said, she saw a plant growing out of the concrete. Her eyes followed the stem up, up, up to a beautiful flower bloom. And with that visual imagery, God implanted her with the knowledge that *where there is hope, there is life*. She changed her attitude. She left the military and resided in Haiti for as long as five years. She's fluent in Haitian Creole and is accepted by many Haitians as a national. Did I say that I love my new co-workers? They are a committed group with hearts of pure gold. I give thanks for we have much work to do...



A Sampling of Our Services

- Loc-cellence (Starting Locks) – suitable for all hair types. Service includes shampooing, deep conditioning and locking services. Only all natural ingredients used. Priced at \$85.00.
- Touche (Lock Maintenance) – suitable for palm-rolled or inter-locked hair. Service includes shampooing and maintenance. Priced starting at \$60
- Elegance (Lock Styling) – Add-on service suitable for clients with existing locks. Prices starting at \$10.00
- The Duet (Two-strand twist) – suitable for curly to kinky hair textures. Service includes shampooing, conditioning and styling. Priced at \$70.00.
- Sleek (Hair straightening) - suitable for all hair types. Service includes shampooing, conditioning and hair straightening for the occasional change of pace. Priced at \$60.00; \$40.00 for children.
- Egyptian Transition (Sew-In Weave Style) – suitable for all hair types. Services includes shampooing, conditioning, cornrowing and weave styling. Priced at \$100.00.
- Diva Mini Braids (Small box braids) – suitable for all hair types. Services include shampooing, conditioning and extension braid services. Priced at \$180.00, includes hair.

Unending Love

I seem to have loved you in numberless forms,
numberless times . . .

In life after life, in age after age, forever.

My spellbound heart has made and remade the necklace
of songs,

That you take as a gift, wear round your neck in your
many forms,

In life after life, in age after age, forever.

Whenever I hear old chronicles of love, its age old pain,
Its ancient tale of being apart or together.

As I stare on and on into the past, in the end you emerge,
Clad in the light of a pole-star, piercing the darkness of
time.

You become an image of what is remembered forever.

You and I have floated here on the stream that brings
from the fount.

At the heart of time, love of one for another.

We have played along side millions of lovers,
Shared in the same shy sweetness of meeting,
the distressful tears of farewell,

Old love but in shapes that renew and renew forever.

Today it is heaped at your feet, it has found its end in
you,

The love of all man's days both past and forever:

Universal joy, universal sorrow, universal life,
The memories of all loves merging with this one love of
ours --

And the songs of every poet past and forever.

by Rabindranath Tagore
(1861-1941)



Soul Chronicles: Swag

During my recent sojourn in Haiti, I flew overhead and saw lush greenery. The mountains still didn't have trees to compare with the Jamaican Blue Mountains or the Appalachians, but they were GREEN!!! I was elated to say the least. I landed and experienced the feel and energy of the place. It felt calmly familiar. Looking out the window of the van in which I was traveling, life seemed in slow motion. I was a passive-observer looking at what felt like a movie. Each of the people had their own story and their own reality. I was catching only a moment of their reality—an insignificant moment of their story... The brief acquaintance who stands out most in my mind was a rather charming student named Franz Pétilion who approached me and boldly introduced himself. I acknowledged and introduced myself as well. He then asked where I was from. I told him, and he then proudly stated with his chest rising to match his words, "I am from Haiti. This is MY country! But then, I guess you would know that." His pride was significant, honest and true. I smiled at his bravado and his self-confidence. He was like my own child. I said, "Yes, I did." After a brief pause, I shared my thoughts and said, "You are a very handsome young man." He returned, "Thank you. And you are a very beautiful lady." I then thought, this child has got game already. I said, "How old are you?" He was all of 11 years. I smiled and shook my head thinking, this child will have all the girls in a few short years. Lord help them...

"I...EXPERIENCED THE FEEL AND ENERGY OF THE PLACE. IT FELT CALMLY FAMILIAR."

Soul Chronicles: God uses hardship to work miracles...

When traveling up to the mountains of Fondwa, I arrived in time to see children in the new school that my organization had constructed in collaboration with one other NGO partner. The school is run by an order of Nuns. Over 600 children attend this school, some walking for hours one way to get to class. My organization employs only six Americans and about 100 Haitians. When I realize that the livelihood of those 100 Haitians largely rests on the shoulders of the Americans who find the resources to sustain the programs, I know I am in the right place. The work is not easy; but then, business ownership has taught me perseverance in the face of hardship and great faith. So, I feel honored to bring these gifts to enrich an organization so worthy of my skills. I am blessed. I returned home from Haiti more empowered to be an effective agent of growth and change.

During this sojourn, I saw Haiti with the eyes of love rather than judgment. It is a beautiful place, in every way. I thought as I left that God has surely had His hand on this place since my last visit. But, He was there all along. I just didn't know where to look. My eyes were clouded with my own perceptions of what life should be that I couldn't see it for what it is. I know better now. I also believe as Pastor Dorlean's wife Jackie so eloquently stated, "God uses hardship to work miracles." The earthquake of 2010 claimed the lives of 230,000 people—so many souls that the National Stadium was turned into a morgue. I believe that tremor was God's shockwave throughout the world to say, "If you have not done it unto the least of these, you also have not done it unto me." I saw Arabs, Japanese, Europeans, Americans and Mexicans all bringing their skills and resources to help God's people in whatever capacity they are called to serve. Haiti is becoming a melting pot of service. It's such a beauty to behold that the birds which had once abandoned this place have returned! As I walked in the mountains of Fondwa and heard a bird at the top of a tree singing to its heart's contentment, I truly realized the miracle of JUST THAT!!!! Only when we lose the garden do we appreciate the vine. And perhaps prophetically, I returned home to announce to my husband, "You've got to visit Haiti. It would be a great place to retire. Hint, hint." ☺ (If he's going to learn French, I gave him about 20 years lead time.) Life in Haiti would not be easy, but when has my life ever been easy? ☺ Struggle is part and parcel of the human condition, and pain is the incubator of soul maturity and national healing. I give thanks.

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