



# THE FUTURE LOOKS BRIGHT IN HAITI

By Tyler Anneliese Moselle

**VOLUNTEERS, STUDENTS, AND HAITIAN COMMUNITY KEEP MOMENTUM STRONG  
AFTER SECOND ANNUAL TECH WORKSHOP IN PORT-AU-PRINCE**

Unless you've been before, nothing can prepare you for visiting Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

Nothing, except watching "Black Panther" as you land. Haiti is truly a living, breathing Wakanda.

## **The Journey to Port-au-Prince**

I found out three weeks before that I was to join my fellow Foundation of the World volunteers in Haiti for PACT 2018. Progress and Accelerated Change through Technology—PACT for short—is a long-term promise to developing countries, like Haiti, to advance change in young leaders through tech education.



# BON BAGAY!

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Simply put, our passionate volunteers were flying to Haiti to help shape the future of Haiti, but also the paradigms around how people talk about Haiti.

As author Roxane Gay wrote, "It's so hard to write about countries like Haiti because there's truths behind the misperceptions people have. But there's so much more. There are multiple truths."

I packed and re-packed, alongside a blend of Anthony Bourdain and Zora Neale Hurston's words nearby. As I drew closer to the flight, I was much more concerned with what originally drew me to get involved with PACT.

Who could resist exploring such a revolutionary culture with strong, ambitious people, or the beautifully rich, exposed African roots in Haitian music, food, and arts?

The painful reality of it all is, success here is envisioned as a diaspora. To succeed, Haiti's best and brightest are compelled to move away and pack their motivation and passion in their bags.

While the nation seems synonymous with disaster and hardship, we were all about to witness how the strain and aftershocks of history are felt in the drive and the passion of the nation's next generation of entrepreneurs.

"Adversity has been there since the independence was born, there's always been a ceiling for Haitian people," Dinah Liger shared. The first black republic is not glorified, but once more infrastructure is more developed and there are more jobs, these folks will be a shoe-in at the front of the line."

## **PACT 2018**

Our time—five short yet abundant days—were fueled by strengthening curriculums in Meraki Cloud Computing, Voice Over Internet Protocol, Network Security, and Professional Development to better match the students' needs and ambitions.

We caught multifaceted angles of Port-au-Prince from the street side merchants

## Empowered Innovation

"The PACT Program allowed a fire to be re-ignited in our responsibility to empower innovation in the global community through technology," said volunteer D'Auria Henry.



scattered along hillside neighborhoods, the winding streets amongst the candy-colored tap-taps, to the sprawling mountains views from iconic Mount Boutilliers.

Early in the week, we climbed a special mountain where locals ascend to their hillside homes, along with goats, cows, and the occasional young child.

We joined hands in prayer and stood on sharp volcanic rocks that look like landlocked reef, standing over the city below as dusk shone through layered cloud cover.

Ayiti, the Taino name of the nation, means “land of mountains”—which clearly refers to the majority of the region’s landforms, the force behind the tectonic plates responsible for the most massive earthquake in the region in the last two centuries, and the socio-economic challenges of remaining resilient seemingly despite all odds.

But once you speak to a PACT attendee, their pride and resilience shine through everything.

As exhilarated as we may have felt while rearranging classroom chairs and helping check in and hand out official PACT t-shirts to each and every student on the first day of classes, a student told us how contagious the excitement was.

It turns out that many of the students discovered PACT on social media, and one student dragged his friend out of bed. “We have to go to PACT, hurry up!”

### Why PACT?

When you understand Foundation of the World President, Reginald Liger’s drive to be the best, you can better understand the growth of the PACT Program at large—once a third of its current size just last year. A documentary crew in tow, local photographer talent, stronger curriculums—all create the platform to launch these students from technology inclined to Haiti’s tech elite.

From here, students can turn back around and provide more opportunities to those coming up behind them.

This was Liger’s goal in the early stages of the creation of PACT—not just a feel-good story, but a chance to make lasting upgrades to Haiti in the long-term. By bringing his toolkit to a resourceful community, Liger and his team can empower and build upon skills in a way that seems more akin to walking in tandem—not investing in short-term answers and leaving.

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# Perseverance

“We’ve persevered through our darkest times and push for greatness for the people of Haiti. Technology is their way out. I’m honored to be part of this journey to help them,” said volunteer Steve Simeus.



## Tap-taps?

“If you’re not careful to keep your eyes open, you’ll get run right over by one of the tap-taps... The name comes from the sharp taps of passengers indicating they’d like to get on or off. Pop and sports stars, religious figures, beloved family members, and free-form decorations. As long as it’s colorful, it works.”

- Anthony Bourdain

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### **This is What Disruption Looks Like**

From network security labs, breaking down network management, to practicing elevator pitches, PACT attendees were hungry to learn, share, and challenge instructors.

A formative moment in the VoIP class happened on day three. Steve Simeus, “Guys, listen up. This is important. I want you to look at the PowerPoint slide. As you see, there’s no one that looks like you up there. Derrick [Clarke] and I came here to help you. Us as a people need to show them that you too can be up there. Take advantage of this course, so that this can be you one day.”

No one could have predicted the immense potential unlocked during PACT, nor was it one-sided. Students taught us so many lessons about Haitian culture, hiring practices, and technological gaps.



We discovered our own ambitions, tapped into deep gratitude and joy during the hugs, tears, and dancing during the closing ceremony. Five mere days in Port-au-Prince, for many of the volunteers our first visit, and none of us were really ready to leave.

Attendee Jean Samuel Jules brought even brought his young son to PACT. He was the MVP of the classroom.

Haitian leaders and innovators, Banj’s CEO Marc-Alain Boucicault, AccessHaiti’s CEO Allen Bayard, Transversal’s CEO Max Larson Henry, and innovation policy expert Jean-Jacques Rousseau joined us during the closing ceremony. In turn, our inspired class of PACT attendees met them with a litany of questions and ideas for Haiti’s digital future and local

opportunities.

### **What’s Next?**

Already, in the months following PACT 2018, we’ve witnessed incredible steps towards a more hopeful future in Haiti.

During this year’s Haiti Tech Summit, the President of Haiti announced his commitment to the rapid scale of tech entrepreneurship with the launch of Haiti’s first incubator.

This experience was a life-changing event for students and volunteers, alike.

Personally, for me, few other moments in my life have defined the level of my ambition. I’ve never been more grateful for the tools and opportunities at my fingertips.

To not take advantage of them and leverage my resources would not only be a disservice to myself, but to these future Haitian leaders.

After meeting so many brilliant students and kind volunteers, the cliched phrases “change the world” and “be the best version myself” now glow with smoldering urgency.

I want to change the conversation and have the students teach us. My hunger for learning was reignited by theirs. My passion for inclusion and diversity, in not just my workplace, but everywhere, has been jump-started. I want to be the strong, relentless woman in tech that the world needs me to be.

As volunteer Florent Dalencourt shared, “Haiti the birth place of my parents and hold a special place in my heart. It is my duty to give back any way that I can. It is a way to connect with generations past. It’s a beautiful country with a rich history of perseverance and culture.”

“The PACT Program provided us with a life-changing experience that reminds us that we bear the responsibility to share our collective knowledge to make the world a better place,” shared volunteer Jerome Sanders.

"It means the world to me," Reginald Liger wrote. "My parents left Haiti and came to the states to make a better life. They did that and at the same time gave my siblings and I a special pride for Haiti. I've been blessed to be able to share that with you all."

"To see a group of people bond over their love for education, technology, and the island of Haiti is hard to put into words," Liger added.

"Change is difficult and change is slow, but the change we witnessed at PACT 2018 was beautiful."

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The PACT students challenged our team of volunteers to continue to come back, year after year, to truly make a lasting impact on Haiti's future.

By engaging with students regularly on social media and in real life—and, yes, strengthening our Haitian Creole skills—we can touch even more lives and fortify our future curriculums.

**How can you help Haiti?**

Consider donating to the PACT Program and supporting our work ahead.

Follow Foundation of the World on social media and help share our Haiti updates to bring awareness to the resilient nation and its driven people.

Our PACT volunteers cannot wait to return and encourage more Haitian excellence.

Your donations keep our dreams alive, so please donate today. Be sure to check out our full-length documentary.

Volunteer Lori Paschall shared a lesson from Maya Angelou, "One shouldn't go through life with a catcher's mitt on both hands. You need to be able to throw something back. Not only was I able to share knowledge and love with the people of Haiti—I received that and so much more from them."



*L'union fait la force*

"I am grateful to be part of PACT. It speaks directly to Haiti's national motto: *L'union fait la force*, or unity makes strength," volunteer Gregory Michel said.

"It is a reminder that we all have the power to influence and make a change in our community if we collaborate."

