



Ambur Braid: **Inspired by Reality**



A Letter to Wayne Braid from his daughter.

Hi, My Dear Daddy:

Yesterday the taptap (small covered bus) was stopped by 12 men with machine guns when we were on the way to our kitchen site in Cité Soleil.

They pointed the guns into the back and asked who we were and what we were doing. Our five Haitians with whom we go everywhere told them and they let us go on our way to work. One of the girls went

hysterical and sobbed. Others were just shocked and frozen.

Soon after, shots were heard because the UN and the police made their way to those men and they stopped our taptap to see if we were them!! Anyways, as luck would have it, I had gotten off the taptap 2 minutes before it was stopped by the guards. Ha-ha! Joy and I were carrying a huge suitcase of baby stuff to the clinic when that happened to the rest of the group.

Things are going well at the clinic. We have been able to unwind one boy's legs by

massaging and stretching a lot. We take the others out of their beds and it annoys the nurses. I only have one day left with the kids and it's tough. I'm scared of what will become of them. Their legs will entwine again; their bedsores will bleed again. There is one girl who has AIDS who has been there for three years. She pouts and screams whenever I'm not holding her. It'll be hard to leave her.

Last night I had an emotional breakdown. I couldn't talk; I just convulsed while I sobbed. I'm not sure exactly what the reason was, but for the entire trip so far I've been stifling tears.

When I went to the school every class stood up and sang for Joy and me, then said their thank yous. One girl said that her parents both just died and school is so important and the only meal she has is the one at lunchtime in the kitchen we built. That was intense. These kids . . . I was holding back tears in every single classroom. Then at the clinic, I'm always frustrated. Being here is exhausting.

But I never saw beauty before I came here. Seeing a hungry child share a banana with three others is beautiful. Suffering is turned into love and suffering can be beautiful. These people are such survivors. They show how sacred a life is. They can teach everyone a lesson in faith. I honestly



don't understand why missionaries come here. You can't preach to the preachers. These people are IT when it comes to having COMPLETE faith in God. God is Haiti.

It costs US\$200 to send a kid to school (including uniform, books, and one meal a day) for one year. Some people send a family \$100 a month, but that's a lot here.

You said before that you would prefer me coming on these trips with the UN or something. Well, I'll explain why later, but they get killed everyday. When you don't respect Haiti, Haiti doesn't respect you. They {the UN} come and decide what they think is needed, drive around in nice, big SUVs and have their guns pointing at people at all times. We come and ride public transit, chill with the locals, talk to the elders, and they tell us what is most important to them and what should be accomplished first.

I met a guy yesterday from Cincinnati who was jealous because I go

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to the slums everyday to work and they won't let him in because it's so dangerous. Then he told me to "stay safe and keep my head down" . . . I couldn't believe it. You don't come here to help people by keeping your head down! We make a point of losing ourselves in the work we do and being aware of all the beauty and suffering and love and anger that is surrounding us. Just so you know, we are safe because our guides are all former street kids. They know everyone on the streets and they protect us.

It's a truly remarkable experience. I'm glad I came with a flexible group that

above all respects the people we're working with and does not look down at them as hopeless, pathetic victims.

I have never been so moved or so inspired by reality.

I'm hungry. We don't eat much here.

I love you lots.
Ambur

Following her return from Haiti, Ambur worked for a month at Aritzia in Toronto, then went to Italy to attend an opera vocal school for five weeks. Recently invited to audition at the Julliard School of Music in New York City, Ambur was one of two people selected by Professor Daniel Ferro of the Julliard school to attend his Opera Music school in Greve, Chianti, Italy. Ambur has now returned to Toronto to complete her fourth year at the prestigious Glenn Gould School of Music. ▲

