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The Last Page: Colby, Do Not Forget

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COLBY, DO NOT FORGET

When I talk about my Jan Plan experience—running in terror when the earthquake struck, and dealing with the apocalyptic aftermath—people generally react the same way: with curiosity, eagerness to know more, disbelief at the horror and sadness of it all, and a sense of compassion for me because I've experienced such a thing. I can pretty much count on them finishing with some sentiment like, "Thank goodness you made it back safe." I'm thankful, too, but every day I find myself thinking more and more about those who did not as well as those I left behind in Haiti.

I have spent the past four years devoted to my double major in biology and ethical genetics (an independent, interdisciplinary major combining philosophy and biology). Like many of my peers, by the time I reached my senior year I had completed my required three Jan Plans and was looking to do something fun and different. That's how I found myself stepping off a plane at the Touissant L'Ouverture International Airport in Port-au-Prince on January 3.

When I look back on the moments before the earthquake, what I remember is an overwhelming sense of happiness, a feeling that I was where I belonged. I was eating the food and speaking the language I grew up with in my Brooklyn apartment, so happy to be meeting family. Then on Jan. 12, 10 days after I arrived, the earthquake struck.

We were driving to a friend's house. Suddenly the ground started to shake and the car rocked back and forth as if it were riding a huge wave. My brother (who was driving) told us to all get out of the car. Buildings and houses along the road began to fall, creating clouds of dust. People were running out of buildings as they collapsed. We grabbed onto each other and ran.

We tried to find the best way to safety, but it seemed that every way we turned we were met with destruction, despair, and death. I didn't know what was going on until my brother said in disbelief, "C'est un tremble de terre!" (It's an earthquake!) We stayed away from buildings and walked home in the middle of a wide street with a pedestrian throng. When we got home we found that not only was our house still standing, but everyone in the house had made it out alive.

My family was very lucky. However, the Haitian government has deemed all homes to be uninhabitable right now, so my family lives in their backyard. Inflation has driven up food prices, so they make do with one meal a day. Clean water is scarce, and violence is a threat.

To think—we are the lucky ones. My sisters have not been orphaned, like so many other children. We haven't lost limbs or suffered other serious injuries. The house we've known for years hasn't crumbled into a sea of rubble.

Now it has been months since the earthquake, and you might have moved beyond the horror and sadness. Haitians have not and cannot. The quake made a tough place worse. Sometimes tragedy strikes those who can bear it least, which is why those who are in a position to do more must help.

Even on its best day, Haiti was a public health disaster. Before the earthquake Haitians experienced rolling blackouts, days without food and clean water, chronic poverty, and death from lack of quality health care. And now? Because we don't see the stories on our televi-



sions anymore does not mean they aren't happening every minute, every hour, every day, every night.

A day does not pass that I do not think about Haiti. For me it is personal, it is about my family and my country, my Haiti. I was thrilled upon my return to campus to find that the Colby community had made it personal as well, and that students ended up raising more than \$70,000 for the cause. There are plans to help in the long term as well.

For this and many other reasons, in May I will be proud to be a graduate of Colby College. My four years at Colby have taught me something that the earthquake reinforced: if you are fortunate and privileged enough to be able to give, to advocate, and to fight for the innocent, the bystanders, the victims, the brave, and the children, you should do just that—and much more.

And so I ask you to follow the example Colby has set, the lessons Colby teaches. Millions of Haitians will live for years in the aftermath of this earthquake. Please do not forget *Ayiti, pays cherie mwen*—Haiti, my darling country.

Yanica Faustin '10 is majoring in biology and ethical genetics. She will enter a premed post-baccalaureate program at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro this fall. Her family lives in both Brooklyn, N.Y., and in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.