

September 13, 2020

## *Santa Chiara Harassed*

On Thursday night around midnight, I was awoken by a loud raucous disturbance outside our front gate. In more than five years here, I never heard anything like it. It sounded like a dozen guys screaming at each other as loudly as possible. Everyone was yelling at the same time. I could not see what was happening. I listened in disbelief for about ten minutes. After returning to bed I could not fall back to sleep.

The next day, I was told that some threw a rock through the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor clinic window. Two of our male staff members were at our gate. They called Robenson, our security guard at home. On Friday, Robenson began his investigation of the incident. At 11:00am he came to my office and told me that one of our neighbors told him exactly what happened. He wanted to know if I wanted to hear the full story directly from our neighbor. I said yes. We met in the whicker chair room. Just as they were arriving, some of the lady staffers were having a hard time with Clare Marie. She was crying because she wanted to stay with me. I let her stay because I knew as soon as she was seated next to me, she would be calm and quiet. During the course of the 20-minute meeting, Clare never made a sound; in fact, after ten minutes, her head was on my lap and she was asleep.

What I heard during the meeting both disturbed me and gratified me.

Around midnight, our neighbor, Mr. Wendel, was outside. He was waiting for a friend to return with his car. He had loaned the car to the friend for the evening. A group of rowdy men appeared. They stopped in front of our gate. They shouted nasty comments and began throwing rocks over our wall. Mr. Wendel stood between the guys and our wall and demanded that they stop making noise and throwing rocks. The men turned their anger on Mr. Wendel asking him what gave him the right to defend Santa Chiara. They asked if he worked for me. Mr. Wendel said he did not work for Santa Chiara. They insisted that he was being paid by Santa Chiara to protect the property. Mr. Wendel insisted why he would try to stop them if he wasn't getting paid. Mr. Wendel said he was my neighbor and that I was helping Haitian kids.

At this point, Mr. Wendel turned to Robenson, pointed to me, and said, "Look at him. He really cares about the children."

The men, he continued, began to argue amongst themselves. One threw a rock that crashed through the window of the clinic. Mr. Wendel said he would not allow them to continue harassing us. Amazingly, he stood up to the men. They said that they asked me for a job and I did not give them one. Mr. Wendel said they could not work at Santa Chiara because they were always drunk or stoned. He said that if they wanted to hurt me or any of the children, they would have to come through him. He told them he had been a street guy (meaning he was tough and knew how to fight) but now he lives in the neighborhood and has turned his life around.

Later I learned the Mr. Wendel has frequently defended us from minor threats. He does so without telling us or seeking any thanks or compensation. During our meeting, I said to Robenson

that I might need to hire a night security guard, but I did not have the money. Mr. Wendel thought I was saying I wanted to pay him for protecting us. He said, "I don't want any money to help keep you safe. You are helping Haitians. Many Haitians work at Santa Chiara. You are giving them the means to care for their families."

Nice.

### *Brace Yourself*

Yesterday I had to take Baby to the dentist to have her braces removed.

Beforehand I sent her a text message saying: "I bored tools from Maceknsn so I can remove the braces myself. It won't hurt too much."

She responded: "OMG my dad is a dentist now. You will do it then and we are not going."

We went. It cost \$150.

### *Warning*

At 12:03pm, Billy sent me this ominous message: "Streets are really bad at the moment, cars on fire, burning tires don't go out." Billy saw protestors set a garbage truck on fire. He later found a photo of the incident on-line.



I needed to go out to pick Baby up at the dentist. I was waiting for her to text me. The dentist isn't too far from us, over all dirt roads. I felt it would be safe. It was.

But the fact remains, protests are again sweeping across Haiti. Severe energy shortages, harsh levels of inflation, and sharp price increases have ignited public anger over suspected official corruption, and led to widespread demonstrations calling for the resignation of President Jovenel Moïse, a businessman who came to power in 2017.



Frustrated, angry Haitian want a more egalitarian, inclusive, and just society, where the rights of every citizen will be respected. They want institutions that work. They want an end to impunity. The Haitian economy has been largely paralyzed. Two million children have been unable to go to school and badly needed aid has been suspended, especially to rural areas.

