

## **CROSSING THE BORDER: SCENARIOS OF REAL ISSUES**

### **Jacques Magliore**

My name is Jacques Magliore. I am seventeen years old and live in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Once a rich and beautiful jewel of the Caribbean, Haiti is now the poorest country in Latin America. The overthrow of President Jean-Claude Duvalier in 1986 was followed by years of bloody political unrest. We hoped that things would improve when the military dictatorship was ousted in 1994, but president Jean-Bertrand Aristide turned out to be a corrupt and increasingly autocratic ruler.

When Aristide was in power, he used street gangs called Chimeres to suppress his opponents. In 1995 my cousin participated in protests against Aristide, and a few weeks later, the Chimeres killed him by necklacing. Necklacing is when a gasoline-soaked tire is placed around the victim's neck and set on fire. After this happened, the rest of my cousin's family, afraid of more attacks, decided to risk everything they had to get out of the country.

Upon their prayer to the Christian God and the voodoo spirits, my cousins' family bought passage on a small boat headed for Miami the following year. Normally the boat would hold five or six people, but the owners had stuffed fifteen in the small cabin. As the boat skirted the southeast corner of Cuba, a terrible storm tossed the tiny boat. Two of the passengers were thrown overboard and drowned. Those who survived were seasick and filled the boat with vomit. The rest of the passengers, covered with sores and suffering from hunger and thirst, finally approached Key West, Florida. Just as they began to feel a thrill of enthusiasm, the U.S. Coast Guard stopped them. As part of a decree from former President Clinton, the Coast Guard intercepted all illegal Haitian immigrants entering the U.S. and promptly took them to a refugee camp in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

The decline of foreign tourists has caused many people to suffer financially. I am one of the fortunate few to be employed. I presently work, making about \$4 a day, as a groundskeeper for a wealthy family. I was able to get my job because I learned about plants from the public school in Port-au-Prince. Many children, especially those who live in rural areas, are not able to go to school because Haiti does not have a well-developed infrastructure.

Most of my friends live in dire poverty. Yesterday I saw a girl who I used to know. She now has a baby and lives in a hillside shack made out of scraps of metal and cardboard.

When I saw her she was at the huge, open garbage dump where the whole city throws out its garbage. She was rummaging through the remains to find something to sell.

For the last 20 years there has been little initiative to improve the Haitian economy. However, we hope that major changes are coming since the United States has driven out Aristide's corrupt administration. In February of 2006, the Haitian people elected René Préval as president, and many countries have pledged their assistance in helping rebuild Haiti. There is still a lot of work to be done, and Haiti will need all the financial and technical support it can get.

1. What problems concerning U.S. and Latin American relations are mentioned in this scenario?
2. What are some of the solutions suggested?
3. Brainstorm other solutions to the problems.