

# Pelege's Story

I am writing this, because I would like to have an opportunity to get my story and my message out to the media. This is the story of how my dream came true.

My name is Pelege. I am a native of Haiti. I was born in a small village called Baie-du-Mesle, located south of Port-au-Prince. This story almost did not happen. At thirteen years old, I dreamt of coming to the United States to live a better life and have more opportunity. Shortly after Jean-Bertrand Aristide took office, the first democratically elected president in Haiti, I left on a boat to seek a better future for myself. The man who organized the trip had an agreement with my dad. When it was time for us to get on the boat the man asked my dad for more money, but my father said no to him and he told my dad I could not get on the boat. I was very upset knowing that my dream was gone. I heard a rumor that the boat would not leave until 10:30 or 11:00pm at night, because they did not want to be seen by the Haitian police. In addition, there was a plan to sneak more people on the boat. All I was thinking all day was that I am getting on that boat! When the nighttime came, some family members, other people and I got on a much smaller boat. As we approached the boat, the people already on the boat were not happy with us because the boat was extremely crowded. When I made it on the boat, I had to face one more challenge lying ahead, my uncle. I always had been very afraid of him! He told me I was not going to get on the boat because my dad got off the boat. He was hitting me and yelling at me, but I closed my eyes and told him that I am not going anywhere. I was waiting for my uncle to pick me up and put me on the smaller boat to send me back home, but I held onto the seat and stayed.

It has been roughly eighteen years since I left Haiti. Knowing the condition the people are in, it is unthinkable that they are stuck and they cannot change their situation. When you have 90% of families with little resources scavenging to put food on the table for their kids, it is very sad. Now I am in a position where I can make a difference for them in their community. I have been very blessed. I could have died on the boat ride over here. When my uncle was yelling and screaming at me to get off the boat, I could have listened to him. The population in Haiti is roughly 10 million people, it's not a big county and the land is not very big at all. In comparison, the U.S. population is close to 400 million and nearly everyone has a chance to make something of themselves. Now that is a huge diffidence. It drives me crazy, because it's been way too long

for a country roughly the sides of Maryland to remain the poorest country in the western hemisphere. I am very aware of the political unrest and the corruption.

Let's not forget about Haiti now. It is a country that defeated the French empire, other countries, and played a big role in 1803 in the Louisiana Purchase. The United States wouldn't be the size it is, had it not been for the Haitian slaves' revolt.

I have a vision! A vision to make a difference in my village, a place where there's a lack of opportunity, food shortages, no access to clean water, lack of education, health care and security. These people in Baie-du-Mesle live in a remote area, where they have been forgotten about. These folks are living day to day not knowing where their next meals will be coming from, but yet they are grateful and they have a positive attitude toward life. If you think you have been to poor areas in Haiti, let me take you on a tour and you can judge for yourself. I am approaching the 18<sup>th</sup> year anniversary since I left Haiti and I have never forgotten about my country. I have endless opportunities in the U.S.

There are two things that separate our organization from other organizations! First, our organization's focus is on Baie-du-Mesle, Haiti, and the surrounding remote villages. Second, that I am the founder of the organization and am a native of Haiti and know the situation first hand. All I want is an opportunity to achieve my vision.

Let me leave you with this quote, "To the world you are one person, but to one person you are the world" ~ Unknown

Let's join together and Hand to Hand can make a significant change to many people's lives in Baie-du-Mesle, Haiti.

Pelege