

Conversation with Nedgine Paul Deroly

In this People First Talk, we learned about how Anseye Pou Ayiti is growing a collective movement of leaders in Haiti who are working for educational justice. Watch the talk [here](#) and see their new short documentary film [here](#).

Key ideas

Lesson 1: We need to redefine leadership as collective action

- The idea of bringing community members together toward shared goals (“Konbit”) is deeply rooted in Haitian culture. Anseye Pou Ayiti recognizes that changing the status quo requires collective leadership. They bring together many local leaders within communities - students, teachers, parents, school leaders - to work together in pursuit of equity and justice for all.
- Collective action is hard in practice. It takes time, energy and financial resources to bring people together and build trust. Cultivating trust also requires ensuring that community members have a regular seat at the table vs. being invited ‘once in a while’. It also takes the vulnerability to admit mistakes and do the ongoing work to repair trust if it gets broken.

Lesson 2: We need to embrace asset-based (vs. deficit-based) orientations

- Anseye Pou Ayiti starts with the idea that Haitians are already ‘mighty’. When the organization began, they did a listening tour asking Haitians, “*How are we at our best?*” and have since embedded this asset-based lens across their work. One example is infusing Haitian culture into classes, which they’ve found to be one of the two biggest predictors of student success.
- Anseye Pou Ayiti also challenges deficit-based mindsets, such as the assumption that a parent needs to have completed formal schooling to be a leader. They are conscious about the vocabulary they use, avoiding disempowering words such as “*fixing, helping, poor*”. They work actively to understand root causes of injustice and disrupt forces of colonialism that have led to dehumanization and de-Haitianization in the education system.

Lesson 3: We need to address dynamics of power since this work is about justice.

- We need to focus on questions such as: *Who is at the table? Why do some groups of people & nations continue to be oppressed? How is power distributed and how can it be redistributed?*
- This work needs informed allies who are committed to equity and liberation, who are willing to contribute without ego, and who can cede space to those who have experienced injustice.



Nedgine Paul Deroly

Co-Founder & CEO, Anseye Pou Ayiti

“We need to redefine leadership as collective action. When hundreds of people come together, identify common solutions, identify the assets that help us reach that goal, and then hold each other mutually accountable, that’s how change occurs and that’s how change is truly sustainable.”

— Nedgine Paul Deroly

Our next People First Talk will be with **Dr. Norah Obudho**, East Africa Director of WomenLift Health on July 25 at 10am EST / 2pm GMT / 5pm EAT / 7:30pm IST. You can register [here](#).

For more information on the People First Community and effort, please visit peoplefirstdev.org or sign-up [here](#).