

Wyclef Jean Launches Yele Haiti

Written by Robert ID540

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Grammy award winning artist Wyclef Jean is about to embark on one of the biggest performances of his life: Tomorrow he takes the lead in a new, non-political, international humanitarian effort to help rebuild his native country of Haiti. Wyclef Jean has been touted as the music industry's multicultural conscience, participating in high-profile benefit shows and charity events. Now he is launching a movement that combines music and sustainable development to provide the youth of Haiti with the practical tools, resources and renewed hope necessary to rebuild their nation.

The movement is called "Yele Haiti" and will focus on education, entrepreneurship, community development, health and the environment. Immediate programs include rebuilding of schools in slum areas, funding community development projects, providing micro-loans to poor and low-income people, supporting youth outreach on HIV/AIDS and assisting with job-creating environmental projects. They will also be holding a free concert in Haiti in the Spring of 2005 for up to 1.5 million people.

To launch Yele Haiti on December 9th, Jean will take the stage at GLO, a New York nightclub and will perform with Roberta Flack, Nelly McKay, Cassandra Wilson, Common, Bilal, Jeff (Tain) Watts and Ben Jelen. There will be special presentations by Susan Sarandon and Jonathan Demme is selling items from his private collection of Haitian art to benefit the cause.

About Yele Haiti

Yele Haiti (<http://www.yele.org>) was founded by recording artist Wyclef Jean. He is being assisted by a task force that includes Susan Sarandon, Russell Simmons, Tyra Banks, Jonathan Demme, Roberta Flack, and Haitians Mona Scott, Dumas Simeus, Maryse Kedar and Gepsie Metellus. This high-level civilian task force was formed to help channel financial support and other resources to help in the re-emergence of Haiti, while taking the steps to ensure that the civilian population there is fully involved in the planning and rebuilding of their communities.

Yele Haiti will play a role in facilitating dialogue in all aspects of the country's development. Jean has already leveraged his standing among Haitians to establish a conversation with key figures in the government, civic and business sectors, as well with rebel and gang-leaders.

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"Haiti is my native country, one I know as the first black nation to gain independence in 1804," he said. "Most other people seem to know Haiti only by the statistics about how bad things are there. Yele Haiti is about showing Haitians that there is a way out, and that it starts with them. It's also about showing the international community that there is a strong Haitian spirit that can be supported in order to foster creativity and ideas which can prove valuable to the world for both business and culture."

Haiti, once one of the richest nations in the western hemisphere, is currently the poorest. Barely half of Haiti's people over age 15 can read and write. The unemployment rate is 80%. Almost 99% of its natural tree cover is gone. The average life expectancy of a Haitian is 52. However, with the right resources and assistance they can turn things around, as evidenced by the fact that Haiti is one of the only developing nations to have actually reduced its HIV infection rate -- from 6% in 2001 to 3% in 2004.

The Yele programs will be managed in part by Orsa Consultants (<http://www.orsaconsultants.com>), a corporate social responsibility consultancy. Orsa has provided Yele Haiti with plan for rollout including program development, branding, and corporate partnerships. The consultancy also brings proprietary project management tools including intranet where all projects can be monitored by project partners. "Yele Haiti embodies the next generation of nation-building where local populations, governments, corporations and NGOs work together to create sustainable development," commented Hugh Locke, Orsa Consultants Partner and Co-Founder.