



Aaron Roth - HOPE International - "Let it Shine " - April 2012

Hi everyone, just a quick note: I'm 70% of the way through my fundraising for the next four months that I'll be serving with HOPE International until the end of August '12. If you'd like to be a part of the mission that I'm doing here in the Dominican Republic, you can easily donate online with a credit card, or send a check with information listed here: www.AaronRoth.net/support/

- Download this email as a pdf: [Aaron Roth - April 2012 Update.pdf](#)
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Have you ever met someone that within the first 30 seconds, you knew you were going to like them? Last week, I met a nine year old girl on a visit to one of the schools in our micro-lending program in San Pedro de Macoris. Within our program, we make loans to private schools to build classrooms or computer labs. By being a part of the Esperanza-Edify program, schools also have the opportunity to take part in business training focused on managing a school, and teacher training (www.AMOprogram) geared toward integrating Christian lessons into daily curriculum.



(Adriana, and her pensive charisma.)



(Adriana's community.)

While sitting in the office with the director, I noticed a young girl peeking her head around the corner, smiling and going back to her work. I'm not sure if she was in trouble and she was being disciplined by having to sit so close to the office, but I thought I would go and investigate. As part of my responsibilities with the program, I go and work with the school administration to develop a "school profile" which entails basic school information like classrooms and number of teachers, to more in-depth information like financial situation, Christian education, and future expansion plans.

Adriana was more than happy to be my tour guide.

The first thing you need to know about Adriana, is that you better have a strong defense for making a statement, because she doesn't believe everything she hears. The second thing you need to know about Adriana is that her smile is contagious, and if we found some way to package it up and the gleeful chuckle that follows, we could sell it to everyone who needed sunshine on a cloudy day, and surely we'd be zillionaires.

Within a few minutes of small talk, it's clear that Adriana doesn't believe my name's lineage can be traced to the brother of Moses, so Jose, part of our team, goes and fetches a Bible. He flips to Numbers, and in chapter 20, we find my name displayed in the title of verse 22. "But Aaron is dead!!!" she exclaims. I am quick to point out, that "this" Aaron is still alive. She laughs, I laugh, Jose laughs. Jose adds that his name is also found in the New Testament, and just like I told you earlier, she doesn't believe him either. But as they study the genealogy of Jesus, she yells her new discovery, "But you're the father of Jesus!!!"



Adriana isn't afraid of asking questions, nor of challenging people to explain their position to fill in the gaping holes in their logic. She wants to know if I'm a Christian, and I say "yes," she says "How?" (Haha!) and when I asked her if she was a Christian, she assuredly replies that "Two years ago, when I was seven, I was baptized in the water at the beach." I have no doubt that there may have been a theological tussle with her pastor as he led her out to the water.



(Jose and Adriana checking the NT.)

With such abundant joy and vitality found in a young lady like Adriana, my mind quickly turns to a few likely outcomes for someone like her in the community where she lives. I noticed on the way in that her neighborhood doesn't have paved streets, there are no visible places of work aside from the tiny corner stores selling basic food items, many men young and old are sitting around without jobs, much of the houses have walls and roofs of sheet metal, and in fact, this particular community is called "Death Beach."



(What some houses are like in the community.)

I know, not just from the statistics, but from people I've met how easy it is not to succeed in a place like this. It's not just because of laziness or lack of opportunity. There are real and evident forms of destruction in the community. It's almost as if the environment is actively working against those doing good. If you're not involved in black market activities, drug sales, or prostitution, then you're going against the grain.

These are not simple temptations. They are better expressed as "pressures." Compare, for example, you're on a diet and the ice cream aisle is tempting, or you're at a friend's birthday

party where someone hands you a plate full of cake and ice cream. You can glide on by that freezer door, but a plate in your hand is much more difficult to toss away. Or compare this, seeing the new clothing your neighbors are wearing purchased with money that comes from illegal activities, to the situation where someone in your family asking you deliver a package and accept the money when a buyer comes to the door.

This is the reality for someone like Adriana. The above mentioned activities are not mere temptations, but rather, here in this community, people actively solicit the youth to participate. One example of this comes from talking to a pastor a few months ago, when he explained to me that he has seen many teen pregnancies in the community as a result of economic pressure. When I asked him to elaborate he says, "When a young girl doesn't have money to pay the bus driver to go into town for work or school, he simply tells her, 'You can pay me in different ways . . .'"

Can you imagine this being a reality for the children in your family or your neighborhood?

I find myself thinking again and again to how we can fight the rising tide of violence, drugs, and prostitution at 'Death Beach'. How can we provide safe places for these children to grow up and live? How can we partner with schools to bring them quality education, give them access to create a world different from the one they are living? How can we continue making micro-loans and providing business training to relieve economic pressures for moms and dads? How can we continue to let the light of bright students like Adriana shine?



(High walls and iron gates to prevent unwelcome visitors.)

As we're preparing to leave, Adriana wants to know when we'll come back to visit.

We assure her that as part of the program, we check in with the schools regularly. Her school is deep into the series

on the wisdom of Proverbs, and we'll be back to see how the lessons are progressing. They'll be using this curriculum for the next year and her teachers will attend our teacher training workshop in the summer. We'll also be notifying the director and administrator of our business training coming up soon, and we'll include them in other activities to connect them with other Christian schools in the area.



(Adriana and her classmates.)

She and 20 other children wave goodbye as we drive away. To be honest with you, those hard questions are ones we wrestle with everyday, and we do have the opportunity to answer them with HOPE International and their on the ground partner Esperanza and Edify, and we are making real and tangible efforts in communities like this one.

Thinking about children like Adriana, I do feel at peace knowing that the Spirit of the Lord is upon her, protecting her and guiding her. She wears her joy ostensibly and she shares of it freely. Her charisma makes me think of this passage:

"No one lights a lamp and hides it in a clay jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, they put it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light." (Luke 8:16)

and this song we sang as kids:

"This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine. Let it shine, Let it shine, Let it shine."

I pray that we continue to help these lights shine brightly in the communities where we work. Please pray for that too.

Blessings to you and your family,
-Aaron

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Financial Support: Do pray for the work of HOPE and if you feel led to support me financially through the rest of my service in 2012, you can find that information here.

Online Contributions:

- Go to www.HopeInternational.org and select the "Donate Now" green tab on the right-hand side of the screen (or click this link: ["HOPE International – Donate Now"](#))
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- The first area is marked as **General** where you can select **"Other (please specify below)"**
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- ***In the box beside **"Other Gift Designation"**, write **"Fellow: Aaron Roth"**

Contributions by Mail (send a check):

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Joan Bauman, Donor Care Administrator
227 Granite Run Dr. – Suite 250
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