

Generation Peace Academy Overseas: Witnessing in Sakete, Benin, West Africa

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Quand on a pas ce que l'on aime, il faut aimer ce que l'on a

Traveling back and forth from the church center to universities, I find more gratitude in the breeze that comes through the windows of our 15-seat passenger van. I'm grateful to the driver, who has spent the past week away from his wife and four kids to drive us around Saketé, a town two hours away from his home. And I'm grateful to the community, who doesn't have as many resources as the bigger towns in Benin but welcomes us with open arms anyway.



The weather is a consistent 93 degrees and humid, and air conditioning is rare in homes and vehicles. Stray goats and chickens are as common as dogs and squirrels in America. There seems to be an abundance of young children, and everywhere - both in schools or streets - they boisterously chant "Ebo! Ebo!" in unison whenever they see the white or Asian members in our group.



The outdoor market is always bustling, tightly aligning the sides of the sandy main road. You can see both kids and adults head-carrying anything ranging from fruits and vegetables, to cloth and handbags with a flat hat. You see people driving small carts, repeatedly squeezing a hand horn to gain attention. And most people decking bombas, an object of envy for us Americans; their brightly colorful and unique patterns convey a beautiful tradition many of us don't have.

I think during this trip I could experience how fortunate Americans are in external matters. This is the first time many of us have been unable to escape the humidity, washed clothes by hand, or even had spotty internet connection everywhere we go. Yet when comparing our attitudes to those of Benin's people, it is obvious that we lack something internally. Maybe it is the general capacity to be grateful in all circumstances, shown through their usual relaxed and smiling faces. Maybe it's the ability, when striving for success, to still fully appreciate what one has before them. Or it could be the culture of greeting your mamas and papas as family, of checking in on your neighbors and asking if they're okay.

There have been plenty of victories during this overseas trip so far. We are currently in the midst of teaching character education in classrooms of 50-80 students, which all participants will have the opportunity to lead. We also meet with university presidents and mayors of the surrounding towns (one mayor being a CheonBo couple, who blessed 430 couples within a month) to connect with and thank them for hosting us. And we are all gradually opening ourselves to experience our group goal, "Commit to understand and inherit True Parent's heart to love and serve the world."

There is so much to inherit from Benin's church community and people as a whole. The movement here is alive and growing fast, and through GPA and YSP, Heavenly Parent's reach has grown wider.

