

Scotties in Martinique

March 5-12, 2016

As part of Agnes Scott College's new curriculum, *Summit*, which focuses on ensuring every student develops leadership abilities and an understanding of complex global dynamics, students of *GBL (Journeys) 102-E: Postcolonial Martinique in Global Context*, undertook a study tour of Martinique.

The study tour of the island, which took place March 5-12, 2016, was co-led by Professor Philip Ojo and Librarian Casey Long, but managed by *Global Works*, providers of community service, cultural exchange, language immersion, and adventure.

The program included lectures, visits, workshops, as well as service learning and exchanges with local schools and artisans, which provided opportunities to engage in meaningful intercultural communication with Martinicans.

At the end of the program, students exceeded expectations in several learning outcomes. They demonstrated an understanding of the historical, social and cultural context of modern Martinique; they recognized diversity and inequalities in Martinique as seen in the racial and cultural components of the island; and they were able to identify the complexities of intercultural communication by articulating Martinican cultural norms and behaviors. Overall, all participants demonstrated an increased preparedness for global citizenship.

The group of eighteen (18) students and two (2) co-leaders departed Atlanta, Georgia in the early hours of Saturday, March 5, 2016. Following a layover in Miami, Florida, the group arrived safely in Fort-de-France, Martinique at 3:00 pm local time to begin an amazing experience discovering postcolonial Martinique.



Source: www.worldatlas.com - Accessed 01-10-2016



Source: www.france-accdom.org - Accessed 01-10-2016



Scotties on arrival at Aimé Césaire International Airport in Fort-de-France, Martinique.

Sunday, March 6, the first full day of travel in Martinique, was beautiful for both the sights and the enrichment of historical culture. The group visited two main attractions: *La Maison de la Canne* (the Sugar Cane Museum) and *La Savane des Esclaves*. *La Maison de la Canne* offers a unique display of the complex connections between a land (Martinique), a plant (sugar cane), and a people (Martinicans). For four centuries, almost all aspects of life in Martinique have been deeply influenced by the sugar-cane based economy, with production organized originally on plantations that depended on slave labor. Forging society and people, modeling landscapes and attitudes, inspiring music, literature and movies, sugar-cane is truly the root of civilization in Martinique.

Thanks to an interactive tour of *La Savane des Esclaves*, participants were able to appreciate the living conditions of Martinicans, particularly after the abolition of slavery. The gardens showcase the numerous medicinal properties of the island's native vegetation.

Shortly after a picnic lunch at *Pont du Diamant*, we made a stop at *La Maison du Baignard*. We had a viewpoint of *Rocher du Diamant* before visiting "Anse Caffard Memorial," a memorial to slaves lost at sea during the voyage from Africa.



On Monday, March 7, we visited *Ecole Primaire Pomme Cannelle Ermigate* in Fort-de-France for a gardening project and an English exchange day with 8-10 year old students. At a welcome ceremony organized by the school administration, Scotties presented souvenirs and school supplies to the institution. The gifts included an Agnes Scott College pennant and bag, story books, pens, and toys. Scotties helped the students complete a gardening project they had started. They cleaned up the different gardens, did some weeding and also helped work on an Eco wall, as shown in the left-hand picture.



Scotties doing community service and exchange at *Ecole Primaire Pomme Cannelle Ermigate*



After all the hard work, participants had opportunity to interact with the students. They had the chance to teach the kids English, and they were able to practice their own French. Overall, the experience was a great one, one that Scotties will never forget! To view the school's blog post and video about Agnes Scott College's visit, please follow this link:

<http://leblogdelecole.eklablog.com/american-guests-7-mars-2016-p1145916>



As part of a Northern excursion, Scotties travelled on Tuesday, March 8 to St. Pierre, once called “Paris of the Caribbean,” where participants had a guided history tour of the ruins of St. Pierre and learnt the history of *Mont Pélée*’s eruption. The visits provided some insight on Martinican history, society, culture, identity, language, and wildlife. Brave Scotties took a (short) hike to get a closer look of *Mont Pélée*. The group then proceeded to *Gorges de la Falaise* (Morne Rouge) for a guided hike/swim through a river gorge to a waterfall. Participants trekked down steep and rocky stairs, then through shoulder-deep waterways leading to a magnificent waterfall. It was an amazing experience!

The next day, Scotties went to *Domaine de la Pagerie* for a guided tour of Empress Josephine’s Estate. For detailed information about the estate please go to <http://www.zananas-martinique.com/patrimoine/la-pagerie.html>.

After this visit, Scotties traveled to *La Forêt Vatable* for an ecology walk, an introduction to the mangrove forest, and a sketching session that afforded participants an opportunity to sooth their minds. In lieu of a scheduled art workshop, a local contact, Veronique, who is also an artist and teacher, gave the group a short talk on Martinican contemporary art.



On Thursday, March 10, Scotties visited *Ecole Primaire de Trois-Ilets* for English, history and exchange activities. After a welcome ceremony, Veronique, our contact from the previous day, gave a fascinating and informative lecture on the history of Martinique from 1498 to 1848, the consequences of the abolition of slavery, and social structures in contemporary Martinique.

After the lecture, Scotties set up four stations of activities: dancing, word games, playing, and drawing. The activities were engaging and fun-filled and they provided opportunities for Scotties to truly interact with Martinican school children. Scotties later departed for *Plage des Salines* in Sainte-Anne, for picnic lunch and beach time at one of Martinique’s most beautiful white sand beaches.



Scotties pose for a group photograph, with *Mont Pélée* in the background.

Scotties traveled to Fort-de-France for a guided tour of the capital city on Friday, March 11. They visited the statue of Empress Josephine, two French forts, the historic *Bibliothèque Schoelcher* (a beautiful example of 19th century metallic architecture), the cathedral, and the island's largest Spice Market, where they browsed through spices, fruits and vegetables, as well as souvenirs.

After the city tour, the group travelled to *Maison de Bélé* in Sainte-Marie for a dance workshop and lesson about the traditional dance known as *Bélé*. Scotties actively participated in the workshop which allowed them to break out of their comfort zones and gain a sense of African pride. Later that evening, a farewell dinner was held in Trois-Ilets.



Scotties pose for a group photograph after a farewell dinner held in Trois-Ilets, Martinique

Scotties pose for a group photograph during a guided tour of Fort-de-France, the capital city of Martinique

On Saturday March 12, the final day, Scotties went on a brief round-trip cruise to Fort-de-France before going to Trois-Ilets for some souvenir shopping. After a truly productive and profoundly memorable one-week of study tour of beautiful Martinique, participants departed Aimé Césaire International Airport, Fort-de-France, excited about upcoming opportunities to share their experiences about this life changing trip!

Unfortunately, Scotties “got an advanced course on traveling,” which falls under “the unknown” in becoming mindful travelers and global citizens. Due to technical difficulties, the Miami-Altanta flight was canceled and Scotties had to sleep on the bare floors of Miami International Airport on Saturday night. After what seemed like the longest night ever—which everyone handled with a great sense of maturity, the group finally arrived in Atlanta on Sunday, March 13 in early afternoon.

Overall, the study tour of Martinique was a huge success. Each day was packed full of activities that taught us about the history, culture, and socio-economic life of Martinique; but embedded throughout the day were opportunities to grow as leaders, listeners, and self-advocates. It was wonderful to watch students support each other and take care of their own needs. They were assigned to a wide range of tasks (head counting, daily prep—“scouts,” medics, snack/lunch brigade, water supply, blog, videography, etc.,) meant to help participants stay safe, healthy and informed. Scotties had meals at an array of local restaurants (*L'Embarcadère*, *Le Café de Paris*, *Copacabana*, *La Marine*, *Poisson d'Or*, and *Oz Restaurant*), which was a great way to appreciate Martinican cuisine/culture. Participants learned a lot; they worked hard but they also had fun!



The global experience was not without challenges and unexpected bumps, such as delayed and cancelled flights, event cancelations, weather inclemency, physical demands of certain activities, unfamiliar culture, especially food, and ethos, etc. But through it all, Scotties demonstrated bravery, teamwork and *esprit de corps*. At every level, participants demonstrated international awareness and intercultural understanding, skills that are essential to meet the challenges of a globalized 21st century society. Their positive attitude during the visit of *La Maison de la Canne* and *La Savane des Esclaves* was commendable. Their level of engagement with students and staff during the service-learning at *Ecole Primaire Pomme Cannelle Ermitage* and *Ecole Primaire de Trois-Ilets* was particularly impressive. The study tour broadened participants' cultural horizons; it provided them opportunities to engage in global service-learning, thus developing a better understanding of social responsibility and community engagement. Based on the results of a self-assessment and other evaluation tools, it is believed that participants came to know Martinicans more deeply and themselves more intimately.

The following re-entry short answer survey responses best summarize the transformative impact of the study tour on participants:

"It was interesting to learn about the values of their culture through dance and movement rather than through museums and lectures. This was an experience that expanded my worldview. [...] It was an amazing opportunity that I will always be thankful for!" (Julia Marshall)

"Before leaving for this trip, I was reluctant to travel and scared of the unknown. Going to Martinique changed all of that. The fact that we were able to create these connections across cultures was incredible. Traveling to Martinique changed the way I think about travel and ensured that I don't take the little things for granted. Interacting with a completely different culture also changed my mindset" (Julia Miller).

"This trip was the journey of a lifetime. I learned so much and had such a great experience. I even saw some transformations in myself. [...] We really learned a lot on this trip, from sugar cane to rum to bélé dancing, to history [...] Overall I think my perspective on other cultures has changed and caused me to not judge a book by its cover until you are fully immersed in the story" (Zoey Perchaluk).

"My exposure to this culture has expanded my interests in linguistic anthropology and has also solidified my interest in a minor or major in French" (Mary Breedlove).

"It helped boost my confidence. [...] It's a wonderful experience learning about different peoples and cultures. Overall, this was a great global experience" (Onna Biswas).

"The trip to Martinique transformed my perspective of island life. I learned that a people united by terrible circumstances find a common strength together. I have definitely changed my opinion on the ability of the island" (Margaret Poore).

"This trip expanded my knowledge in a French-speaking way and as a world traveler. I have learned more about myself and of the culture of Martinique. After visiting, I confirmed my decision to continue enrolling in French courses and travelling abroad" (Eleanor Pettit-Kruse).

"I became a little more outspoken than usual and bonded with others. [...] The idea of trying new things was exciting and was in itself a process of adapting and making changes to my daily routine...an achievement for me that traveling brought out. I like the new me that was able to experience the wonders of Martinique – I would like to go back someday" (Jazmine Green).

"We didn't just look at nice art or go to sterile museums. We jumped right in and experienced the raw, uncensored culture that is the more genuine kind, which really allowed me to gain a more comprehensible cultural experience. This trip has shown me that just visiting the 'tourist' locations is not enough. Having this unique experience in Martinique has permanently changed the way I plan to travel and experience other cultures" (Marianne Danneman).

“Thanks to this trip I feel more capable of taking on leadership positions. It has also made me a more fearless and curious global learner” (Clara Kippelen).

“I re-learned to appreciate the beauty around me. This trip was simply the best. No questions about it. Thank you so much!” (Zoe Katz).

“I learned about the rich culture on the island, but also about myself. I learned that passing my French class isn’t the same as really learning the culture, and that you can have a trip that balances vacation time with volunteer work. Thank you so much for allowing me this opportunity to travel abroad with these amazing people” (Julia Henning).

“This trip allowed me to gain a sense of African pride. After the bélé dance class, I learned to express myself with hip and arm gestures. I was happy to be able to embrace my blackness in Martinique and plan on using this cultural confidence when I return to America” (Hannah Culbreath).

“Students were able to break out of their comfort zones and gain a sense of African pride. Our cultural immersion proved successful” (Tiffany Tucker).

“I’ve become more open, accepting, and daring. I loosened up and tried my best to step out of my comfort zone. I feel like I can move forward to bigger and better things, and look forwards to returning the Martinique soon with my family. I feel so lucky to have chosen Agnes Scott College, to have received this opportunity and to have taken it” (O’Lisa YaaWaithe).

“I have realized that I am a little more socially outgoing/adventurous. I also realized how unprepared I was and how mediocre my French skills are despite working with the language for 4-5 years” (Alyssa Willis).

“I learned more about myself. [...] I learned that I can easily adjust to different situations and weathers. [...] I learned a lot about the culture” (Anling Kaplan).

The recurring key words participants used to summarize the journey include: *broaden, expanding, new perspectives, new opportunities, global, fun, community, enlightening, experience, connected, bond(ed), humanity, exchange, and knowledge.*

Here is a link to the trip’s unedited videos and photo album <https://drive.google.com/a/agnesscott.edu/folderview?id=0B8tSYfToAQZ7VWdYMWxLUDZHRIE&usp=sharing>

Thanks to the staff of the Center for Global Learning at Agnes Scott College, especially Julie Champlin, for coordinating the first-year trip to Martinique. Thanks also to Taylor Anderson of *Global Works*, the third party provider in Martinique, for a great job ensuring that our expectations were met.

Reported by Journey (Martinique)’s co-leaders Philip Ojo & Casey Long, Spring 2016