



UP AND DOWN IN HAITI

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SOUND OF ROAD—3 SECONDS, FADE UP AND UNDER
BRING UP SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS FOR 3 SECONDS.

Up and down down and up these are the two directions in Port au Prince.

It is an unforgiving place, this mountain of a town, one that plays out its history, its politics, and its complexity in this most raw of daily commutes.

The first descent starts before dawn, around 4 am

SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS ON ROAD

It has to, otherwise you won't make it to market by 6 am, and you won't get a prime spot to sell your mangoes, grapefruits, cell phone chargers, and t-shirts.

Step by step, hopeful frayed sandals and dusty, dress shoes, used for weddings, baptisms, graduations, and every other occasion make their way down hill,

The shredded concrete of the long past its prime road meets strong local legs.

This daily battle ultimately wears down both the path, and the feet.
Up and Down

SOUND OF FOOTSTEPS ASCENDING ON ROAD

Around 7 am the second commute begins, slowly pressing uphill. The gardeners, security guards, cooks, and nannies are heading up to the mansions that keep Port au Prince's socio economic structure in place.

100 Gourdes (Haitian monetary unit) for their thoughts. Many would probably take that deal...times are tough in post earthquake Haiti. But they were tough before too.

SOUND OF ROOSTERS AND DOGS

Standing on the top of a cinderblock roof, just off the road, serenaded by roosters and feral dogs, the view is of dominoes disguised as houses, waiting for the next shift in the weather or the ground to start sliding down.

Locals are climbing the same mountain that their parents climbed, and unless something drastic changes, that their children will climb too. Carefully they ascend, one step, two step...

SOUND OF STEPS, CROSSFADE WITH SOUND OF SUVs

They shift from the road to a small sliver of dirt or grass, as their employers speed down with ease and abandon, smashing the road into pieces with Land Rovers and Porsche SUVs.

Businessmen, politicians, foreign ambassadors, UN coordinators, and other elite are shielded from the emerging sun and growing heat by tinted windows, air conditioning, and designer sunglasses. They check their Blackberries as they are driven down the hill by their drivers and bodyguards.

SOUND OF SUVs

These beastly vehicles blast the economic pilgrims walking up the hill with a cloud of exhaust, a kind of dark, toxic bonjour to bring in the day.

The smell of burning garbage and brush also covers what must have been a crisp morning air before Christopher Columbus kicked off Haiti's long, enduring middle chapter.

SOUND OF RUNNING

Young schoolboys in pink dress shirts and grey shorts race downhill, followed closely by older sisters in blue blouses and grey skirts. Their book bags slap against their backs as they skip over potholes.

The children slide , down down down, slipping by women heading up...up...up... carefully balancing baskets on their heads full of bread, mangoes, and bananas.

AMBIENCE OF FOOTSTEPS.

As locals head up Port au Prince's winding spine, they hit Montagne Noire, the stretch of road known as the black mountain.

A neighbourhood that now hosts one of Haiti's darkest heirs, the recently returned "Baby Doc" Duvalier.

Instead of prison, **he's freely allowed to gaze down on the mess he and**

his father wrought, during decades of dictatorial mayhem", human rights abuses, and self-enrichment.

And while impunity may reign on Montagne Noire, the people still move, as they always have, up and down, down and up.

Like blood they flow through the veins of Haiti, keeping this twisted paradise alive, and giving it a chance to keep breathing, and to keep changing, one step at a time.

AMBIENT OF FOOTSTEPS

This is a transcription of a radio piece produced by Jesse Hardman in April 2012