



# Brandeis University

The Heller School for Social Policy and Management

Program in  
Sustainable  
International  
Development

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September 21, 2004

Dear students, faculty, staff, friends:

It with great sadness that I inform you that Mironda Heston, who received her Master of Arts in Sustainable International Development just last May, passed away this afternoon. It is thought that Mironda contracted dengue fever in the last few weeks working on the Central Plateau in Haiti. She was evacuated to the States and died at a hospital near her family's home in Illinois.

She was 24 years old.

Mironda began her association with Haiti while still an undergraduate. In her senior year she volunteered with Friends of the Children of Haiti. Her commitment to Haiti also grew out of her mother's dedication as a pharmacist participating in medical missions to this poor country.



You had to know Mironda to appreciate this, but she brought to her life's work (and it was her life's work no matter how brief) a quiet dedication, a humility that is rare even among development workers. She prepared for her service by learning Creole and wanted nothing more than to work among the poor.

Her Master's Paper for SID, which was well received, was entitled "Haiti's *Potomitan*: The Role of Peasant Women in Haitian Society." She presented a careful and sympathetic analysis of her experience in Haiti during her Second Year Project. Her paper focused on peasant women as the *Potomitan* (*central pillar*) economically of their families and of community development in rural areas.

She returned to Haiti immediately after graduation to continue her work with women as part of the peasant movement *Mouvman Peyizan Papay*. She could never have known, in the end, how complete was her identification with the poor of Haiti.

Mironda has now joined those who have sacrificed their lives in service of compassion and social justice. She dedicated herself to a country abandoned by the world, with the deepest poverty a few minutes off shore of the richest country on earth. We wish she could have been with us longer, but we love her all the more for her selflessness.

Our hearts go out to her family. Gifts in memory of Mironda may be sent to support her work in Paypaye, Haiti where the community has named the clinic she helped begin “The Mironda Heston Medical Clinic.” Her family is accepting donations in Mironda’s name to support the clinic. You can send donations to Helping Haiti, 429 N. West St., Mineral, Ill. 61344.

Sincerely,  
Laurence R. Simon, Ph.D.  
Professor and Director