

Cultural diversity between america and haiti

[Countries](#), [United States](#)



I interviewed one of my co-workers, A. S. He came from Haiti about 10 years ago and has lived here in Florida ever since. Just last year in December 2017, he officially became a US citizen. I chose to interview A. S. because he is a very sweet person and is always willing to help people out, plus he speaks English very well. While speaking with A. S., I learned that he values and believes a lot of the same things I do, but mostly because he has spent the last 10 years of his life here in America. However, I also learned a lot of interesting and very surprising things about the Haitian Culture that even he doesn't necessarily practice.

During my visit with A. S., I learned that Haiti has some major sanitation concerns outside of the cities. He informed me that there are not many resources available to a lot of the country and that it is not uncommon to defecate in bushes and to use rocks or stones to clean with. On top of the conditions, an earthquake back in 2010 made matters worse. According to Gelting, R., et al, (2013) “ Haiti is the most underserved country in the western hemisphere in terms of water and sanitation infrastructure by a wide margin; only 69% of the population has access to an improved water source and 17% had access to improved sanitation facilities in 2010.” (p. 667). After the earthquake, Haiti found the little resources it had become even more sparse with the outbreak of Cholera. Gelting, R., et al, (2013) stated “ the primary means of cholera transmission is through consumption of water contaminated with human waste. With low sanitation coverage and inadequate availability and treatment of drinking water, few barriers were in place to stop the rapid spread of cholera.” (p. 667). Since 2010, there have

been a few measures put in place to help with the sanitation issues. (A. Seraphin, personal communication, July 23, 2018).

Another interesting culture difference between Haitians and Americans is regarding health care. A. S. informed me that there is no health insurance in Haiti and the hospitals are nothing like they are here in the United States. I also learned that I never want to have the flu in Haiti. In the Haitian culture, when you have the flu they mostly use herbal remedies to feel better. A. S. told me that it is also common that the mother of a sick child will urinate on top of the child's head and it is said to wash away the sickness. In Haiti, there is not a lot of access to medications. More holistic measures are taken when necessary such as wrapping a warm compress around their head in the event of a headache. (A. Seraphin, personal communication, July 23, 2018).

In addition to the differences in health care, child-rearing is also somewhat diverse. A. S. informed me that in his culture, contraception measures are not normally taken. Coitus interruptus is the preferred method of birth control. Also, the women do not always go to the hospital during labor. Children are preferably born at home and delivered by a midwife. As it pertains to labor pain, medication is not taken unless absolutely necessary. Women are also known as a stay at home mom and do not work. Their job is to take care of and raise the children. A. S. told me that his wife works a part-time job here in the U. S. but he was very reluctant to tell me this, almost like he was somewhat ashamed of it. (A. Seraphin, personal communication, July 23, 2018).

Religious practices in Haiti are focused around Vodoun. This religion revolves around spirits and does not usually have an organized hierarchy. According to Bourguignon, E. (1985) “ the spirits (loa) behave in conformity with the moral laws which govern peasant society in Haiti. . . . They provide supernatural sanction for such mores as taboos on murder, incest, theft and the showing of disrespect for the old.” (p. 293). Distress within a family can be viewed as a message from the past family spirits who may be demanding a sacrifice or are looking to punish those who have neglected their obligations to the spirits. Another common Religion in Haiti is Christianity. The beliefs of the Haitian Christians are mostly the same as those who practice Christianity in America.

Haitian Christian’s culture is pretty similar to the American culture when it pertains to death. When a family member passes away, celebrations are held. Just like in the American culture, family members will gather at a particular spot like a funeral home or a family member’s house. People either mourn or laugh about the great memories they had of their loved one. They even share traditional Haitian meals which consist of sautéed rice and vegetables with a hint of spice. There are a few differences in the afterlife practices than that of the American culture. MacFarland, A. (2018) stated that “ Family members will give the deceased a final bath to cleanse them for the afterlife.” (p. 1). Haitians who practice Vodoun have some very specific rituals for their deceased. It is believed that a priest needs to perform a ritual in order for the soul to be released from the body of the

deceased. If the ritual is not performed it is believed that the soul will travel the Earth as a bad omen.

A. S. and I have very similar beliefs since he has been in America for 10 years; however, from my research I have learned that the Haitian culture is extremely different from mine. The most appalling thing I have learned from this experience is urinating on one's head when they are ill. When I am sick, I take medicine; lay in bed, and sleep. It is very interesting to hear and read about the beliefs of people from different cultures that they call normal but to someone else, it might be insane. As a nurse, I have to be aware of the beliefs of different cultures because taking medication is not the answer for everyone.