

Three young deaf women killed in Haiti for speaking Sign Language

It is a somber time for disability rights communities around the world. Last week, the world learned of the horrifying murder of three young Deaf women who were killed in Cabaret, Haiti on March 19, 2016 for using sign language. Their names: **Monique, Vanessa, and Sophonie**. They were hard working women who had gone to Port-au-Prince to purchase supplies for their food [business](#). Monique and Vanessa were members of a deaf network of artisans who had begun making and selling small wallets, purses, and were learning to sew school uniforms. Sophonie was a mother of six and active in her church community.

We mourn them. We are outraged that, in 2016, women with disabilities can not leave their homes and communities for fear of attack. We are outraged that women with disabilities can not earn money for their families for fear of threat of violence. We are outraged that the communities that we call home are not safe.

Fear. Anger. Outrage. Frustration. Hope.

In sorrow, we also feel hope. Hope that is emanating from the very community that should be the most frightened: deaf women. No longer content with losing the independence, respect, and dignity that they fought so hard for after the 2010 Haiti earthquake, these women – mothers, sisters, grandmothers, teachers, artisans, entrepreneurs, healers, leaders – are creating a drumbeat. A steady drumbeat that you can sense from the numbers of people who marched on April 1 in protest. A protest that started in a place of safety – Saint Vincent School, which is the oldest school for deaf people in Haiti and a shelter for abandoned children with disabilities. *The drumbeat is getting louder.* A steadier drumbeat that you can sense from the number of allies that marched side-by-side and shoulder-to-shoulder with these women. *The drumbeat is getting louder.* A loud drumbeat that you can sense from those who have said they will fight for justice, ending with the prosecution of those responsible for the three deaths.

The drumbeat is saying: "We want justice." "No more violence against women." "No more violence against people with disabilities." "We will not stop." "We stand together for Monique, Vanessa, and Sophonie."

We stand with the disability community, our grantees, and our partners and allies to bring justice for these three women. To ensure that the drumbeat does not die with them.

Submission by Arlene Wilson-Grant, Grants Manager, Disability Rights Fund