

# The art of healing

## *Part 1: Medical Mission to Haiti*

by Julie Rybarczyk

Onetime paramedic and psychotherapist, Gary Holland has seen his share of helpless situations---children in abusive homes, a mother killed by an oncoming car. Tragic. Horrifying. But different. Somehow, nothing had prepared Holland for what he saw two years ago on a medical mission to Haiti. This is part one in a series of three stories about how a mission to Haiti has changed Gary Holland's life.

### **It Began With a Kiss**

The sun shone hot. It was the third day of the trip---each day hotter than the last---and sweat glistened on the necks of the small group of Boise doctors as they entered the San Fil Hospice. This diverse coalition of physicians was taking part in an annual "mission of mercy" to Haiti, organized by St. Alphonsus Regional Medical Center.

Holland and the group followed their petite guide---a four-foot nun---past rows of beds in the sweltering, dank, cinder-block room. Patients perched like cats in the open windowsills, waiting.

### **Death hung in the air, almost palpably.**

The nun explained that this is where the sick ones come to die. When their families can no longer help, when the pain gets too great, they come here. Seven or so die each night. Their diseases are usually so advanced, the most this nun and her tiny colleagues can do is start a few saline IVs and hopefully provide a bed and some comfort---if not for the body, at least for the soul.

The bare-bones facility, designed to hold 50 patients, was packed with at least 200 sick men and women, each with virtually no hope of being healed.

As the nun talked with the physicians about how they could help, Holland noticed a woman on the floor, struggling to lift her body up, her strength barely enough to pull herself to her elbows, then to her knees. The nuns noticed her effort and came to her aid.

Small as they were, even with one nun under each arm, it took several minutes to raise the woman to her feet.

Reprinted courtesy of Today's Physician

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Holland watched as the woman approached. Her tired eyes met his, and he could tell almost instantly where she was headed. For a moment, fear of disease overpowered the compassion he felt, and he held back a cringe. But as she approached, Holland leaned down to embrace her and offered his cheek. The woman placed a big, wet kiss upon it, and Holland knew his life would never be the same.

### **What Can't Be Healed Should Be Remembered.**

Holland was an unlikely candidate for the trip to Haiti. His background is richly varied, peppered with medical experiences, but centered around a more aesthetic theme: his art.

An accomplished portrait painter and trained opera singer, Holland was invited to join the Haiti group as the "token artist"---someone who could capture the dire need and unflappable dignity of the Haitian people in a way that folks back home could not ignore.

That was two and a half years ago. Today, that trip is as much a part of Holland's life as, and maybe more than, ever.

"Most people who see such great need just get an empty hole inside.", he reflects.

"It's overwhelming---the enormity of it. You don't know where to start." Yet through his art, and his faith, Holland has devoted most of his time since then to finding a way to start.

### **Too Young for Such Suffering.**

For Holland, the hardest---yet most rewarding---part of the trip was the children. Hundreds and hundreds of them, packed into orphanages, abandoned by parents who could not afford to feed them, or had died. The "lucky" ones end up in an orphanage that can provide regular meals. But most Haitian children have to settle for one meager meal about every two days. With conditions like that, Holland expected to find mass portions of despair. He was mistaken. Surrounded by laughing children who clamored to hold his hand as he toured various orphanages, Holland saw that many of these children have something extraordinary---hope.

And as long as they have food and shelter, they also have a chance.

### **A Defining Moment**

It was the final evening of their trip. Dinner was surreal. Holland and the rest of the group were served exquisite food in the opulent setting of their razor-wire-bounded hotel courtyard, while guards armed with machine guns held positions in the shadows to protect them.

"Waiting" Oil on Linen by Gary Holland

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Afterward, Dr. Mike Mercy, then head of the St. Alphonsus Emergency Room, invited Holland to join him as he checked on a patient at the pediatric hospital.

Just inside the hospital door, the two American men passed a Haitian farmer, stretched face down on a lobby bench, a puddle of tears forming beneath him on the floor. Dr. Mercy soon learned it was the father of one of his patients. Or, former patients.

The man's 11-year-old son had died that evening, after a painful saga that included watching his son bleed uncontrollably, seeking the help of a voodoo witch doctor, waiting for magic healing that never came, carrying his son for a week's walk to this hospital, and arriving too late for the medications and transfusions to save his boy's life. It was too late.

"Imagine the feeling," said Holland. "Being that boy's father, thinking that if you only would have come sooner..." For Holland, it was heart wrenching.

### **What Happens When We Leave?**

Holland, who believes in a merciful God, wrestled with the misery, struggling for answers. One night, after touring an overcrowded city hospital---a hospital that was bombed the very next week during ongoing unrest---Holland knelt in his hotel room and cried, seeking a way to make a difference.

With family who needed him in Boise, he knew he couldn't stay. He also knew he must not forget. He knew that once back home, it would be tempting to pretend this kind of pain and loneliness didn't exist. He promised he wouldn't. And he hasn't.

### **The Start of the Help**

Holland has spent the last two years pouring his memories into a series of 14 paintings and a book, *The Children of Haiti*, that poignantly depict the inexplicable hope of the children he met. And he has formed a nonprofit foundation, *For The Children, Inc.*, to raise funds for poor Haitian children and, eventually, children around the world.

Proceeds from the sale of Holland's books, paintings, and prints are being sent to the orphanages he visited in Haiti.

But Holland, a father himself, is passionate about doing more. He is actively pursuing the opportunity to adopt several Haitian orphans.

In

anticipation, he is converting the 1.5 acres around his Victorian home into a children's paradise---with a duck pond, horses, room to run, and more. "I really believe every single life is sacred," says Holland.

"Through the paintings and through the foundation, I want to do everything I can to put faces to the problem of world hunger.

Once you've looked into one of those eager faces---and really seen the beautiful, hurting person behind it---you can't look away."

(Next month: Called to Paint The Pain)

**---TP**

*Gary Holland paints commissioned portraits and other fine art.. His "Children of Haiti" paintings are on display and prints are for sale. If you are interested in supporting For The Children, Inc., please call 208-860-0603.*

*"Dignity" --- by  
Gary Holland*

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# The art of healing

## Part 2: *Called to Paint the Pain*

by Julie Rybarczyk

**This is the second in a three-part series about Gary Holland's medical mission to Haiti--and it's ongoing impact on this forgotten country. A onetime paramedic and psychotherapist, Gary Holland's primary role on this trip was to record the struggle of the Haitian people in his art.**

**The art he was commissioned to create has become more significant than he could have ever imagined.**

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The tiny pickup sped through the streets, leaving a cloud of dust in its wake. As the small delegation of American doctors and nurses prepared to leave Haiti, panic set in. The silent threat of kidnapping, detainment, robbery--or worse--had seemed to intensify over their last few days in Haiti, and the group was eager to return home--to safety.

As the truck carrying Gary Holland and the medical team from Boise's St. Alphonsus Regional Medical Center arrived at the airport, they came upon throngs of Haitians, frenzied by hunger, swarming the gates, desperately seeking any form of generosity--or food--the foreigners would offer.

Armed guards cleared a tenuous path through the crowd, but as the group sat through three nerve-wracking hours in customs, they began to wonder if those same armed men might prevent their departure from Haiti.

Later, as the airplane's wheels left the runway, cheers went up inside the plane. Holland and the rest of the team were bound for home. And--Holland knew--bound to never see the world in the same light again.

### THE END OF LIFE AS HE KNEW IT

Back on American soil, culture shock set in. Holland's entire sense of reality--his home, his grocery store, his checking account, his work as an artist--had been shaken.

He now knew another reality.

Gary Holland with daughter Alaina

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He could still smell it--the constant stench of burning human waste. He could still see the emaciated people. Mothers, fathers, grandparents, children. Especially the children. "I was numb," says Holland. "I literally went from holding children in my arms--watching them die--to

sitting back in the complete comfort of my American lifestyle."

Holland struggled with the incongruity. "Everything seemed uninteresting. The edge, the adrenaline I had felt in Haiti was no longer there. I didn't see anyone starving. I didn't see any armed guards. Everything was safe. Homogenized. I knew I needed to get back to my work, but the very thought bored me."

For two months, Holland wrestled to find meaning. He relentlessly questioned the value of art and music--the very basis of his professional career: With so much anguish and pain in the world, what is the value of living? Why paint beautiful flowers or perform lovely music, when tiny babies he had just planted with kisses were dying? What more is there--in this life and after? Where is the meaning? Finally, Holland picked up a brush, and began to paint.

## A DOSE OF COLOR

He started with a child--a little girl he'd met in Haiti. Holland speaks of this first painting-- "The Spirit of a Child"--in his book, *The Children of Haiti*:

*"We are tempted to consider this little child with a measure of pity. We make a mental note to send a few dollars to Haiti to help people like her.*

*But as we look closer we realize for the first time the obvious--that she is someone's dear, innocent young daughter.*

*While so many artists might have chosen to paint a subject like this child with an emphasis on her dismal situation, I chose to see the miracle of life, that spark of creative beauty, a delicate flower in the midst of her uncertain world. I painted the life within, unconstrained by the external form. I painted the human spirit with all its subtle, yet incredibly powerful energy."*

## HOPE TAKES SHAPE

As Holland painted, the emotions flowed, healing took hold, and, slowly, the answers came. The very style he chose to paint his subjects--Impressionism--reflects vividly the meaning Holland finally found.

"Art," says Holland, "is about communication. Art that lasts through the ages works symbolically. It triggers feelings and experiences that we've all had.

The Spirit of a Child, oil on linen, by Gary Holland.

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"To me, impressionism depicts these children as though they were one with the atmosphere surrounding them, as the culture and spirit of the Haitians seemed to be--so interwoven with their environment.

"The current fad in art," Holland continues, "is to shock people or appear 'different.' The world

depicted by modern art often appears angry as a result. But I believe angry images have the power to shape a more angry reality. "My goal is to help people find the rays of sunshine in an often dark world. I endeavor to trigger positive, empowering, life-giving emotion--I believe art is *that powerful.*"

So he painted reality. Not the reality the world would have seen in a glance at his snapshots, but the reality he experienced.

## **THE HIDDEN REALITY**

"The Haiti I saw was like...a sewer," Holland explains. He hesitates to use such a repulsive word, but can't find another strong enough to express the utter filth he witnessed. "Streams of urine flow along the streets. The country has almost no natural resources left. People have bones sticking out of their skin for lack of money to get medical treatment.

"But I didn't want to paint that. I only wanted to hint at it. Instead, I wanted to paint the dignity--these children are so quick to smile!"

So, in his series of paintings on the children of Haiti, Holland created a backdrop of sallow colors--sickly yellow-greens, dirty yellow-browns, weak grays--to represent the pallid environment in which they live. And--not coincidentally--sometimes his subjects actually blend right into that grim milieu.

But if that's not the first thing you notice in Holland's paintings, don't feel bad--that's exactly the way he planned it. Using purer tones, strokes, and colors, he draws the eye to the hope that still remains: the sacred human spirit within each child--something you can see through the movement of a hand and the spark in an eye.

Hope in the midst of such suffering? How can it be?

For Holland, the hope is rooted in faith--and in his commitment to help. He believes as long as there is someone to help these children, there is hope.

## **A MOTHER'S LOVE**

One of his works, "The Injured Child" is a clear departure from the others. Using the stark contrast of charcoal on linen, Holland depicts a mother holding her child. The infant girl had been horribly burned by spilled lantern oil.

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In the portrait, they are leaving the doctor but--even though this was several months after the accident--it was the first time the child's second- and third-degree burns had even been seen by a physician. The scar tissue now held her arm in a permanently bent position. Her mother shook her head continuously as the doctor showed her how she should tear the scar tissue periodically to free the arm. She could not--would not--inflict any more pain on her child.

After the visit, she gathered herself together and left with her baby. But even in this heart-wrenching story, Holland finds hope. "I recently heard that with the gracious help of American Airlines, a badly burned Haitian child was flown to a hospital in Miami," says Holland. "They are now preparing to reconstruct her disfigured face and arms."

Holland hopes--believes--it could be this child. "That's what happens," he says with conviction, "when we don't let death and violence shape us into despair."

## **OUT OF THE DIRT SPROUTS LIFE**

As for Holland, the hope grows stronger every day.

"I've come out of seeing death and chosen to focus on the life that's sprouting everywhere, like flowers. And I want to help feed the flowers."

As he painted the children of Haiti, he realized the art itself could be used to help--perhaps he could send the proceeds from any sales back to Haiti. Those initial thoughts have blossomed into a series of prints (so the artwork can reach more people), a book (*The Children of Haiti*), and a brand new foundation called For The Children, Inc., directed by Holland. He is using all of these tools to raise money--and to change reality--for the children of Haiti.

The commitment to help has energized Holland. "I wake up every morning excited," he says. "Rather than become complacent or overwhelmed, I've made a choice for life--and I can do something about it."

Next Month:  
**HELPING HAITI**

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Gary Holland paints  
*Gary Holland paints commissioned portraits and other fine art..* . If you are interested in supporting For The Children, Inc., please call 208-860-0603 or visit their website at [www.forthechildreninc.org](http://www.forthechildreninc.org).

The Injured Child, charcoal on linen, by Gary Holland

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## **HELPING HAITI**

This is the conclusion to a three-part series about Gary Holland, a portrait artist who was invited on a medical mission to Haiti, facilitated by Boise's St. Alphonsus Regional Medical Center.

A onetime paramedic and psychotherapist, Gary Holland's primary role on this trip was to record the struggle of the Haitian people in his art.

The art he was commissioned to create has become more significant than he could have imagined.

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**P**ushing a brimming shopping cart through the refrigerated air of his neighborhood grocery store, Gary Holland couldn't be further from the Haiti he remembers so vividly. Scanning the colorful, food-packed aisles for his weekly needs--bread, milk, fruit, snacks--he is unaware of the frenetic pace around him, absorbed in his own hunt for food.

Until he hears the cry.

He turns, tries not to stare, sees a mother comforting a crying baby, sinks suddenly deeper into his own thoughts.

"When I hear a baby cry," says Holland, "I am immediately triggered back to Haiti. I can't stop remembering the smell, the touch, the cries of the babies."

### **A BABY ALONE**

There is one baby in particular who haunts Holland's memories. He held her just hours before leaving for home. She was tiny—no more than three months old. And, like so many others, she was an orphan. Alone.

As he rocked her gently, she looked at him as only a baby can. "Her eyes said, 'OK. You're here to take care of me. Everything is fine now,'" recalls Holland. "But I knew she had maybe a week to live. Maybe less."

Reprinted courtesy of Today's Physician

## **The art of healing**

### *Part 3: Help For the Children*

Gary Holland with friends in Haiti

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With so few medical resources, there was nothing the doctors could do. They had given up on her.

Putting that baby back in her crib was an agonizing moment for Holland. "There was this sense of breaking a child's trust," he says. And as a child psychologist, Holland realized the enormity of such an action.

"The biggest crisis a child can face--whether it is through abuse, abandonment, whatever--is to lose his or her trust in an adult."

The pain of that moment, and others like it, drove Holland to finish 14 paintings and a book on his experience. And it compelled him to establish For The Children, Inc--a charitable organization committed to helping the poorest of the poor--first in Haiti, then around the world.

## **DEFYING THE NUMBERS**

"In material terms," Holland writes in his book, *The Children of Haiti*, "a child could hardly choose a worse place to be born than the island nation of Haiti."

The statistics are daunting. Three of four Haitians live in poverty. Sixty percent of the country's 6.8 million people are unemployed. Most are illiterate. One in ten babies dies at birth. Nearly half of Haiti's children don't see the age of six.

But Holland is no longer intimidated by the numbers. What began as a heart-breaking trip to Haiti has become a powerful means of saving lives.

## **THE HELP TAKES SHAPE**

For The Children, Inc. is making a difference. Here are just some of the services they provide:

Child nourishment programs--  
"We focus on meeting the most basic needs--not on education, not on trips to America, not on pushing religion," says Holland. "Our goal is to feed them. Period."

mission programs--Without the help of volunteer physicians, the Haitian children in particular have little chance of receiving medical care.

## ***AMONG THE GIANTS***

*All over the world  
children aspire to become  
grown-ups. Adults aspire  
to become child-like.  
Somewhere in between lies  
a time when we aren't  
certain which direction  
to proceed.*

*We all remember the  
giants. They held us when  
we were little and loomed*

*over us when we were lost  
in the supermarket.  
Sometimes they seemed to  
be omniscient, knowing  
what we were thinking  
and what we would do next.*

*In Haiti the children are  
just as small, the adults just as big as elsewhere in the world.  
Life may be very hard for families, but children are still children. They aspire to be big.*

Among the Giants  
Excerpt from *The Children of Haiti*,  
by Gary Holland

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Ongoing medical treatment--For The Children, Inc. helps fund free medical care to poverty-stricken children. Occasionally, they help bring a patient needing specialized care--or foreign medical personnel needing technical training--to America.

Public education--Holland is working with art museums around the country to arrange a traveling exhibit of his "For The Children" paintings, in hopes that it will be a launching pad to educate kids on world poverty and show them how to help.

To be most effective in these pursuits, For The Children, Inc. works with established organizations, such as Haiti's Our Little Brothers and Sisters, Inc, founded nearly 50 years ago.

### **ADOPTION--THE ULTIMATE AID**

Another service For The Children Inc. provides is adoption assistance and parenting skill training.

For Holland, an enthusiastic father of four and professional child psychologist, this unique outreach strikes a particular chord. He passionately desires to give orphans a loving home by adopting as many as he possibly can. Starting with one.

As a single father, the financial demands of raising more children have so far held him up, but the quest to adopt drives him.

For The Children assists parents like Holland who want to help

these children who so  
desperately want parents.

"There are so many adults  
fretting about whether they can  
have their own children," says  
Holland. "I am convinced that  
all it would take is for them to  
hold one of these desperate  
children in their arms and see  
the trust in the child's eyes. They'd never want to put that child down again."

But, Holland acknowledges, adoption can require special skills. Orphans have urgent needs. They have been abandoned, which can create problems with trusting--both as an infant and later

### ***THE PRISON OF POVERTY***

*It is late afternoon  
in Haiti. The sun  
begins to set over  
the street of Port  
au Prince.*

*Hope fades as  
night arrives  
without food for a  
meal. Darkness  
comes, and the  
cries of babies  
can be heard  
throughout the  
ong, lonely night.  
Morning comes,  
another search  
for food, and  
medicine for the baby if there's money.*

*One wonders about God. The God of hope, of gentleness. Does He exist?  
I was tempted to give up hope. Then a little boy caught my eye through the bars. He was so thin,  
and covered with sores. One eye was swollen shut.*

*When he smiled at me, the God of hope returned to my world.*

The Prison of Poverty  
Excerpt from *The Children of Haiti*,  
by Gary Holland

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in life. To prepare parents--and support them along the way--For The Children, Inc. conducts training on how to restore trust, create stability, and communicate love to their adopted children.

With enough patience and the right skills, Holland believes any parent can change the life of a starving orphan. Forever.

### **HIDDEN MOTIVES**

As honorable as Holland's tireless work for the children of Haiti is, he is the first to admit his motives are not exclusively altruistic.

"I am personally finding that by giving of myself, I am not only meeting the needs of these forgotten children," says Holland, "I am meeting one of my own needs as an adult--to know that I matter.

"By helping children live--and live a better life--our own lives become more exciting," he claims. "We rediscover that vital component to happiness that was missing."

### **A FAMILY LOST, A FAMILY FOUND**

Recently, Holland learned of twelve children from the Dominican Republic who were kidnapped and put to work in the hot, harsh sugar cane fields. Most likely, some were used as sex slaves. All of them were hungry, distraught, terrified.

When the children were discovered, they were living in a shack. Their parents could not be found, so the government sent them to an orphanage supported in part by For The Children, Inc. Now these children have a new family. As painful as their pasts have been, now the healing can begin.

In Haiti, each child's story is as traumatic as the next--some were abandoned on the streets with gangrenous limbs, others given up by mothers who could not bear to watch them starve. But it is stories like these that For The Children, Inc. hopes to change.

### **ONE CHILD AT A TIME**

Holland and his board members know there are statistics just as tragic all over the world. They plan to survey one or two needy areas every year (last fall it was Eastern Europe, this fall Vietnam). Each trip will result in more paintings, more contacts, and more ways that For The Children, Inc. can help.

With millions of orphaned children in the world, the task can seem overwhelming. But, as Holland points out, they can change the statistics one child at a time.

"The money an American couple can blow on a Friday night's entertainment could provide life to a Haitian child for two years," says Holland.

It's a phrase so familiar that it perhaps doesn't convey the actual urgency. The reality is that without that \$60--an amount that would barely dent an American's lifestyle--a child will literally be robbed of life two years earlier than with it!

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"Do you remember the final scenes from the movie Schindler's List?" asks Holland.

"The rich hero--after selling all he owned to save hundreds of

Jews--realized that he still owned an automobile. It occurred to him that if he had sold that car, he could have purchased the lives of more people. And, after leading hundreds to freedom--amid cheering and praise for what he had accomplished--we watched him weep with remorse for the few he didn't save."

It's a remorse Holland never wants to have. He is zealous in his battle for the children.

"Every child is special and deserving of life," he insists. "To me, every child is a deliberate, passionate creation of God. If you doubt that, just look into their eyes. You will find a gentle little spirit who hungers for life— and for your love. "

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*Gary Holland paints commissioned portraits and other fine art.. His "Children of Haiti" paintings are on display and prints are for sale. If you are interested in supporting For The Children, Inc., please call 208-860-0603 or visit their website at [www.forthethechildreninc.org](http://www.forthethechildreninc.org).  
**A HAND FROM ABOVE***

*She was everywhere I went. As I visited the orphanage, I'd find her waiting here, waiting there, always present as I came out of one building or another.*

*Up her hand would come, sliding quietly into mine. With so many children vying*

*for attention,  
somehow she was  
always at the front of  
the line.*

*She had impish ears  
and hair braided by  
the older girls.*

*A small pigtail poked  
straight up into the sky. Her velvet, emerald green blouse colorfully accented her rich, reddish  
brown face. Her eyes appeared ringed with eyeliner, as if she had been into her mother's  
makeup.*

*But she has no mother anymore.*

*As she held the hand of a woman from our group,  
it appeared as if the hand could be coming from heaven.*

*Perhaps it could be a hand she had held once before, when she was very little...before the  
orphanage.*

**“A Hand From Above”**

Excerpt from *The Children of Haiti*,  
by Gary Holland

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## THE OTHER VIETNAM WAR

Fighting for the lives of Vietnam's orphans

by Julie Rybarczyk

As director of For The Children, Inc., a Boise-based charitable foundation, Gary Holland spends most of his time raising money for orphaned children in today's poorest countries.

When he's not talking about them—to civic groups, donors, churches, and other agencies--he's painting them. The portraits he creates of these young lives are made into prints and sold to raise funds.

And when he's not painting the children, he's visiting them--as often as possible. It is during these trips that Holland experiences the life-and-death nature of his work.

Recently, the government of Vietnam opened its doors to For The Children, Inc. On his second trip in the last few months, Holland brought along a small Boise medical team. Their mission in Vietnam was to scout sites for future medical teams and identify orphanages to support.

This is the story of his work in Vietnam so far.

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## NO HELP IN SIGHT

The nighttime air in Ho Chi Minh City was fresh and warm. It was a beautiful spring evening.

But kneeling on the pavement of a busy intersection in modern-day Saigon, Gary Holland felt an all-too-familiar ache in his stomach.

It was one o'clock in the morning. Above him, policemen waved clubs and yelled for Holland to get out of the street. Around him, a huge crowd of curious onlookers strained to see what was the matter. Pham Thu, Holland's Vietnamese associate phoned for help and held them all at bay. At his knees, a 19-year-old boy was unconscious, fragments of the motorcycle he'd been driving scattered all around. His head wounds were massive and, as a former paramedic, Holland knew he would die unless he received medical treatment soon.

It wasn't hunger that was gnawing at Holland's gut, though he'd just been interrupted from a very belated dinner at the cafe across the street. It was another young person who desperately  
"The Rice Planters" by artist, Gary Holland. 24" x 80" Oil/Canvas  
First painting from his "Children of Vietnam" project which will be donated to raise funding for orphanages.  
Gary Holland with "Huong" at Vietnam orphanage.

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needed help--who would most likely die without it--and who wasn't getting it.

Frantically, Holland looked for transportation. There was none. Holland's Vietnamese friend said the ambulance might take several hours to arrive. And the taxis had suddenly disappeared.

No one wanted blood on their seats.

As the men with clubs screamed for Holland to move the boy out of traffic, the medic in Holland screamed at the thought of putting him in the motorized rickshaw he saw on the street. But he knew it was the only option. As he was taken away, the boy's body began convulsing and Holland realized the boy would probably die before he reached the hospital.

Back at the café, the owner poured jars of tea on Holland's bloody hands as he washed them over the ditch. He returned to his dinner with a heavy heart. And the next day, he returned to Boise, determined to recruit help for the children of Vietnam.

## FEELING THEIR PAIN

After several visits to Haiti, arguably the poorest country in the world, Gary Holland had seen his share of destitute orphans. But it's not a sight one gets used to, and the children of Vietnam were just as needy as any he has met.

“It’s heartbreaking to see children without families of their own,” says Holland. “It makes me feel grateful for the blessings I have--my family, my home.

“But it also makes me restless. After holding these children in my arms, after crying as we had to say goodbye, I find I am constantly scheming to find ways to bring parents to Vietnam and Haiti, parents who will bring these children home—forever.”

#### A CHILD ALONE

It was the Tam Bin orphanage he was scheduled to visit. Holland stood in a room filled with 50 toddlers--squealing, crying, giggling, and wobbling around the room, most of them oblivious to his presence. But as he looked around, he noticed a tiny baby girl--maybe 12 months old--carefully picking her way toward him, stumbling across toys and children.

Finally, she reached his feet and raised her hands in the universal symbol for

Orphanage near Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) operated by Catholic nuns and local volunteers.

FTC Director of operations in Vietnam, Pham Thu, with friend. Tam Bin government orphanage near Saigon.

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“Pick me up, please.” He obliged.

Her legs gripped him like a vice. She had no plans of letting him go--and he had nothing he’d rather do than hold her. So she accompanied him for the next hour of his work, keeping his left arm and hip occupied.

And then it was time to go.

Holland pried her loose and handed her to the matron. The child sobbed, desperately reaching for Holland’s arms. The matron handed her back and the tears stopped. The smile came back.

“She’s your baby now,” the Vietnamese matron and her assistants said teasingly. “You are her papa!”

Holding this tiny child, Holland wished it were that simple. He wished he could give this child the parents she longed to have. But finally, his eyes filled with tears, Holland handed the baby back and turned to leave.

“My last memory of that day,” Holland recalls, “was of this little baby in the window, crying with her arms held out as we left the orphanage. We all cried.

“And my heart is still aching.”

#### NO MORE GOODBYES

Finding homes for these children is a passionate goal of For The Children, Inc. The organization is working with the CASI foundation and a local adoption attorney to make Vietnamese adoptions possible in Boise.

“Our goal is to give every child a loving home, as quickly, as easily, and as inexpensively as

possible,” says Holland. “In Vietnam, the government is very pro-American and is working hard to remove bureaucratic obstacles to smooth adoptions.”

In spite of current adoption fees running from \$12,000 to \$35,000 per child, depending on the agency and the country of adoption, For The Children, Inc. is determined to help parents find their children for as little as \$10,000 to \$15,000.

“Combined with Senator Craig’s persistent efforts to raise the adoption income tax credit from \$5,000 to \$10,000 or more,” says Holland, “we foresee the adoption of much larger numbers of orphans.

“If I can reduce the expense of adopting to zero, I will do it.”

In addition, For the Children, Inc. is working with local churches to create a program that helps parents meet the costs of adopting. “The churches know that the Bible regards the caring for orphans and widows as ‘true religion’,” says Holland. “As Mother Theresa also discovered, there is no higher calling in life.”

Orphan in Saigon. She would peer suspiciously at us, even at 14 months of age. Once she was held closely, however, she melted into me, content.

[NEXT](#)

But For the Children, Inc. had no money left. They had given it all away on the last trip to Vietnam. The very next day, Holland received e-mail from a man in Colorado who offered to pay Holland’s way to Vietnam.

“Problem solved,” smiled Holland, “--only one day after returning to Boise!”

And Holland believes that if people will open their hands and their homes to the needy children of the world, the miracles have only just begun.

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If you would like to support For The Children, Inc., please call 208-860-0603 or visit [www.forthechildreninc.org](http://www.forthechildreninc.org).

[HOME](#)

***"When he smiled at me, the God of hope returned to my world."***

Life may be very hard for families, but children are still children. They aspire to be big.

**“The Prison of Poverty”**

Oil on Linen

30” x 30”

***"Perhaps this could be a hand she had held once before, when she was very little...before the orphanage."***

See the humanitarian art of Gary Holland: [www.hollandgallery.com](http://www.hollandgallery.com)