



Children waiting to be adjusted in a poor, unfinished church



Dr. Conte with the head priest.

THE SPANISH ISLAND

By Dr. Derek Conte

519 years ago, the Spanish sent three ships west into oceans unknown to find a quicker trade route to the Far East. The ships were manned by 77 men of all sorts: adventurers, mercenaries, even criminals awaiting sentence. The success of the trip was remote with no guarantee anyone would ever return from the journey alive but, after 31 days at sea, the Genovese captain finally sighted land. It was an island so lush, green and rich that Christopher Columbus was moved to call it, "the Pearl of the Caribbean". He also called it the "Spanish island", and so it became known as "Hispaniola".

Of course, Hispaniola today is comprised of two countries, Haiti, to the west and, to the east, the Dominican Republic, the site of the most recent chiropractic mission trip by Chiromissions, led by Dr. Peter Morgan. I joined this trip myself because I missed that feeling of excitement and revelation I experienced in Tibet last year and, to be sure, working with the Dominican people, I got it in spades.

5,000 years before Columbus' journey, Hispaniola was populated by the Arawak and other tribes from from Central and South America. They eventually blended to become the peaceful Taino people, which Columbus first encountered and called, "Indians". because he believed he'd actually landed in India. On Columbus' second trip back in 1493, he found the Taino population diminished, partly due to disease and partly to attack by a cannibalistic, warrior-tribe known as the Carib. To support the booming agriculture the Europeans brought with colonization, African slaves were imported to assist the Taino in the fields.

Ultimately, all these populations: White, Black, Taino/Carib, all mixed and became today's Dominican people.

"Haiti", the Taino word for "mountainous land", was colonized in the 1600's by the French and quickly became known as the "Jewel of the Caribbean", the richest island there or anywhere else in the world, it was thought. But the French also achieved this on the back of African slavery and finally, in the early 1800's, with the passionate scent of the American and French revolutions still in the air, a slave revolt resulted in the slaughter of virtually every French man, woman and child in the territory and marked the beginning of Haiti's decline, which seems not yet to have reached its nadir.

It is these, and many other populations that chiropractic missionaries go to serve, at their own expense, to heal the sick and to bring the power of chiropractic to the consciousness of the world. On this mission, 49 doctors and students worked in churches in the northern Dominican Republic for a week and adjusted over 7,000 people, from babies to those with crutches and wheelchairs. One 8-year-old child I adjusted, named David, was in a wheelchair with cerebral palsey. When we were finished he tried to speak the first words of his life to thank me and say, "Goodbye". These missions are full of small miracles and I was proud to be among those who served. I will do it again. Looking forward to Cuba!

Dr. Derek Conte is a founder of Chiropractic Specialists on Concord Road in Smyrna. For questions or a consultation, call: 404-784-6008.



Dr. Derek Conte