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# Local man, Oprah discuss slavery

BY HOWARD MCEWEN | ENQUIRER CONTRIBUTOR

Jean-Robert Cadet's cause is the 300,000 child slaves of Haiti known as the restavecs. As their advocate, the former restavec who lives in Cincinnati has spoken to the United Nations and U.S. Senate and taught at Northern Kentucky University, where his autobiography was required reading for freshman last year.

The reach of those speeches will pale in comparison to his appearance today on Oprah Winfrey's TV show.

"The experience on the Oprah show was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," Cadet said. "It was exciting to sit next to Oprah, having a conversation as if she was my close friend. She was down-to-earth, intelligent, friendly, knowledgeable and concerned about issues of social justice."

**ADVERTISEMENT** Restavec means "to stay with" in Creole, Cadet said.

"Children are given by their parents to families in hopes of a better life," he said. "The reality is that the children become domestic slaves, deprived of schooling, robbed of their childhood and living under constant threat of physical abuse."

The practice is as old as Haiti itself, but the restavecs' status has deteriorated.

"Haiti is a much different country today than when I was a child," he said. "The streets were not covered with trash as it is today. There was some infrastructure. Today, the roads are in decay, electricity is scarce or nonexistent, water is contaminated, and people have no jobs or hopes of a job because there is no industry. People are starving and dying of preventable diseases.

"Also when I was a child, restavecs were owned by wealthy families. Now, because of the awareness created around this issue, the word restavec has become taboo for the wealthy and educated. It is the poorer classes that own restavecs today."

Cadet's goal on the show, like his speeches, was to talk about the restavecs' plight.

"I see my appearance on her show as a way of bringing the restavec issue to a very wide audience," he said. "The Oprah show allows me to reach the mainstream audience on a national and international level. The potential for impact and



PROVIDED PHOTO

Jean-Robert Cadet an activist working to stop slavery in Haiti, meets with children in Caribbean country.

**On the air**

**What:** "The Oprah Winfrey Show."

**When:** 4 p.m. today.

**Where:** WCPO-TV, Channel 9.

change is huge. People will be able to go to my Web site, [restavecfreedom.org](http://restavecfreedom.org), and find out direct ways they can impact the situation of restavec children."

Cadet's autobiography is "Restavec: From Haitian Slave Child to Middle-Class American." When bought through the Web site, proceeds go to his foundation.

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