

*Haitian boys to return despite charges United Press International December 21, 1995,
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United Press International

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SECTION: Domestic News

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HEADLINE: Haitian boys to return despite charges

DATELINE: DETROIT, Dec. 21

BODY:

Eight Haitian boys with a traveling dance troupe were preparing Thursday to return to their homeland despite charges they were sexually abused at an orphanage there. A Detroit judge ordered the dancers from the St. Joseph Home for Boys in Port-Au-Prince to return to the home after determining he had no jurisdiction in the case. The boys, mostly young teenagers, had gone to juvenile authorities in Detroit after arriving for a fund-raising performance Dec. 2 at Marygrove College. The boys told authorities they were sexually and physically abused at the orphanage by their guardian and troupe organizer **Michael Geilenfeld. Geilenfeld** denied the charges. He said the boys made up stories so that they could live in the United States rather than go back to their impoverished country. But Kimberly Bell, an attorney who helped the boys in Detroit, said Geilenfeld has faced similar accusations as far back as 1987. Americans visiting Haiti and British authorities who got complaints from the traveling dancers in England also have investigated Geilenfeld, Bell said. However, charges against Geilenfeld have never been brought to court in Haiti. There is no juvenile-protection system there, Bell said. And judges in other countries say they lack jurisdiction. After leveling the charges in Detroit, a judge had placed the boys in protective custody at Marygrove College, pending Wednesday's hearing. But the latest decision means they should be returning to Port-Au-Prince with Geilenfeld by the end of the week.

*ORPHANS RELEASED TO MAN THEY ACCUSED OF ABUSE Detroit Free Press December 21,
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December 21, 1995 Thursday METRO FINAL EDITION

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HEADLINE: ORPHANS RELEASED TO MAN THEY ACCUSED OF ABUSE

BYLINE: JACK KRESNAK Free Press Staff Writer

BODY:

Six Haitian orphans who accused their dance troupe chaperone of physical and mental abuse were released to the man's custody Wednesday by a Wayne County Juvenile Court referee.

After the Michigan Department of Social Services said none of the boys' accounts of events that allegedly occurred in Michigan could be considered child abuse or neglect under state law, Referee Lorraine Weber dismissed the petition against **Michael Geilenfeld**.

Geilenfeld, who was accompanying the troupe on a U.S. fund- raising tour, is founder and director of the St. Joseph Home for Boys, the orphanage in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, where the boys live.

"This case does not involve the kind of abuse that would fall under the court's jurisdiction," Weber said.

Officials "believe that if the allegations did occur, they did not occur in Michigan," Weber said.

Weber turned over confiscated plane tickets and passports for the boys to Geilenfeld, who, according to a document sent by the Haitian government, is their legal guardian.

The passports of three adult members of the troupe were to be returned directly to them, Weber said.

Geilenfeld said the allegations, which included claims that Geilenfeld withheld food from the boys, were without merit. He said he would try to get the children aboard a flight to Haiti as soon as possible.

"They are children from the streets," Geilenfeld said. "They have honed their manipulative skills and they know how to get certain reactions."

Geilenfeld promised Weber and two attorneys representing the children -- Erma Gillis-Heck and Richard McKnight -- that the children would not face retaliation for their charges.

Under Michigan law, Gillis-Heck and McKnight could petition the court on behalf of the children, but both said they agreed with the DSS decision not to pursue the case.

McKnight said he would call the Caribbean nation's human services agency and the United Nations to ensure that a follow- up investigation is conducted.

In 1987, boys at the orphanage claimed physical and sexual abuse by Geilenfeld in Haiti. No charges were filed. The country has been in turmoil in recent years, requiring intervention by U.S. troops in 1994 to restore elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to power.

Geilenfeld said Wednesday the 1987 allegations were groundless.

Despite publicity about the charges, he said no benefactors of the orphanage had cut off support.

Justin Ravitz, representing the government of Haiti at the hearing, said officials wanted the children returned to Geilenfeld's care.

Marcia Covert, a lawyer representing Geilenfeld, said anyone was welcome to visit the

orphanage to investigate the children's care.

The abuse allegations surfaced in Detroit on Dec. 2, shortly before the boys were to perform at Marygrove College.

Kimberly Bell, a Detroit attorney who said she has researched previous abuse allegations by the dancers, called Detroit police to report that one boy, 10-year-old Sony, said Geilenfeld had choked him.