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Zanmi Detroit

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Shirley Alcé Konaté



Dear Family, Friends and Community, a challenge is something that by its nature or character serves as a call to battle, contest, or something that needs special effort. 2014 was definitely a challenging year for our community. We had to overcome a number of hurdles that have left some deep scars. Many families in the Haitian community have suffered losses or experienced a loved one's grave illness. As a whole we are still reeling from having lost a friend, a brother, a sister, a husband or a wife. When there's unity, victory is certain and overcoming challenges is possible. I am so proud to belong to a community of people who care about each other and rally around each other when times get tough. We have cried together and are healing together.

2014 was also a very arduous year for HNGD. With a new board in place, we had to figure out which direction to go with the organization. Thanks to the unwavering support and dedication of our Vice-President Dr. Jean-Claude Dutès and Treasurer Maxceau Cylla we were able to get our bearings. In spite of the challenges HNGD supported a number of activities: a father's day event- *An Nou Fete Papa Yo!*

Bonne Fête Papa!, a lecture - *Mental Health Issues Affecting Haitian American children in the U.S.*, and the elegant *Hats & Bow Ties Brunch*. Additionally, we created a new website which is being regularly updated: www.haitiannetworkdetroit.org. Last but not least, we have a number of new members that have joined the HNGHD family. I am particularly excited about this influx of new blood that will help revitalize the organization!

2015 is here! This New Year will no doubt bring its set of challenges. 2015 will also be an opportunity to reassess, recoup, move forward and start fresh as a community and as an organization. I am proud to announce that HNGD is in the process of planning the first ever Haitian art and craft festival in Southeastern Michigan. *Bel Bagay Lakay* (Beautiful things from home)! The festival committee is comprised of a dynamic group of individuals that are working tirelessly to ensure that this event is a wonderful experience for all. ■

Shirley Alcé Konaté

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Margareth Corkery,
Aixa Marchand,
Dr. Marie Soledad Nelson

A METRO-DETROIT FIRST: A HAITIAN ART AND CRAFT FESTIVAL

by Margareth Corkery



Logo by
Bécel Dubreuze Junior

The Haitian Network Group of Detroit is currently in the process of organizing a Haitian art and craft festival: **Bèl Bagay Lakay**. Although, still in its infancy stage, **Bèl Bagay Lakay** which in Haitian Creole means beautiful things from home, has generated a lot of interest in our area, including an article by Sherri

Kolade in the *Farmington Press*(August 14, 2014).

The **Bèl Bagay Lakay** committee is comprised of two co-chairs Maggy Corkery and Dr. Soledad Nelson, HNGD'S president Shirley Alcé-Konaté, Ana Lucius, Ervince Lucius, Bill McNeece, Valerie McNeece and Fritz Momplaisir.

On July 21, 2014 Alcé-Konaté, Corkery, and Nelson introduced the project to the Farmington City Council members and requested access to the Sundquist Pavillion and the adjoining Riley Park in downtown Farmington. The concept of the project was favorably received and unanimously approved. A couple of meetings with different city officials have taken place since. In March 2015, HNGD will present to the Council the final plans for **Bèl Bagay Lakay**.

The dates for the festival are **July 11 and 12, 2015**. **Bèl Bagay Lakay** will showcase many fine artists and crafts persons of Haitian descent from Haiti, Michigan and other areas of the United States. This 2-day outdoor event will give the Metro Detroit residents an opportunity to sample and experience the uniqueness of the Haitian culture through its art, craft, music and food. **Bèl Bagay Lakay** is a family oriented event. It will offer many hands-on activities for children that will introduce them to the Haitian culture through games, storytelling, folkloric dance class, etc...

The **Bèl Bagay Lakay** committee has been working tirelessly to ensure that this venture is viable. Ongoing efforts are being made to reach out to different governmental entities in Haiti as well as to local organizations in Metro Detroit, in order to create partnerships. HNGD is proud to announce that Madonna University and the Consulate

General of Haiti in Chicago have expressed their willingness to support this worthy endeavor. Additionally, HNGD is actively seeking local sponsors who may be interested in taking advantage of this unique opportunity to promote their business. The application form and sponsorship packages are available on HNGD's website.

Haitian Network Group of Detroit is aware of the importance of having volunteers involved in such an event. **Bèl Bagay Lakay** has been approved by the Chrysler Group LLC. Motor Citizens Volunteer Program and the event is now posted on the Volunteer Center website. As a rule, salaried Chrysler employees are allowed 18 hours of paid time off to make a difference in the world through volunteerism. This is a chance for HNGD to recruit any Chrysler employees who want to give back to their community. The activity number for **Bèl Bagay Lakay** is ID: 258081 and ID: 258080. To sign-up, employees need to go the following address: https://chrysler.smartsimple.us/s_Login.jsp

Questions and inquiries about this opportunity can be forwarded to motorcitizens@chrysler.com As one can imagine this ambitious project requires a lot of preparation, planning and most of all funds. The first fundraising activity for **Bèl Bagay Lakay** took place on Sunday December 14. The themed brunch, **Hats and Bowties**, featured delicious American and Haitian dishes on the menu. This event attracted a number of faithful and new HNGD supporters, including the Honorable Christine Greig, the newly elected State Representative for Farmington and Farmington Hills. Mrs. Rose Marie Jean-Louis and Mr. Bécel Dubreuze Junior received the prize for best female and male accessory. A big "Merci" goes to the **Bèl Bagay Lakay** committee and to the community members who contributed to the success of the fundraiser: Marie-José Alcé, Adeline Auguste, Danielle Desroches-Sanon, JINETTE Dumont-Chapman, Jocelyne Charles, Gilda Ford & Roy Ford.

For more information about **Bèl Bagay Lakay**, please visit our website: <http://haitiannetworkdetroit.org> ■

MEET THE GRADUATES OF 2014

By Margareth Corkery



Besides ensuring our physical and emotional survival, the second most important contribution parents make to the lives of their children is to provide them with best education their means allow. With an education we are always in a position to turn luck into an opportunity for durable achievement of any kind. In a tribute to both parents and their remarkable children, we are happy to recognize the graduates of 2014 for their academic and /or professional achievements.



Ché Michaëlle Alcé Jean-Charles is an alumna of Grosse Pointe South High School. She is currently a first year STEM Scholar at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. Upon receiving her BS in Science and Mathematics, she plans to continue on to dental school. Congratulations to Ché for being one of the recipients of a 2014 scholarship from the University of Arkansas and from the Jamaican Association of Michigan!



In 2014, **Clelie Faith Choute** received a BS in Social Services from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Her future goals include obtaining a MSW degree and founding a non-profit organization. This ambitious young lady currently works for Senator Martin Knollenberg as the office manager for financial affairs at Allstate.



Mathieu Harry Charles has dedicated his life to protect and serve his community. This alumnus of the University of Detroit Jesuit High School and Academy graduated from the Detroit Police Academy in 2014. Mathieu currently works in Detroit's 1st Precinct. We are eager to see what he has next in store for us!



Marc René Charles is also an alum of the University of Detroit Jesuit High School. Last year he received a BS in Health Management from Bowling Green State University in Ohio. Marc's ultimate goal is to become a nurse practitioner. The Charles family has a lot of reasons to be proud of him!



Patrick Henry Noel graduated from The Academy of Arts University in San Francisco, one of the top art schools in the country, in December 2014. His major was Computer Animation and Computer Aided Design. He is an accomplished portrait artist and painter who has sold his work to some of the top art galleries and patrons in the San Francisco area and in other parts of the US. His work is all over the internet. In our estimation, his greatest work is a charcoal portrait of his grand-mother, Cicie. It has received several awards. He has also painted his mother, his father and even his defunct grand-father to ward off any type of interfamilial rift related to who is better loved. Based on this astute move, he could definitely have a career in PR or politics. Patrick is now home, planning a career in his field of study. In the meantime, he continues to produce all types of arts in variety of media while enjoying a well-deserved break from being away for so long. Best wishes to Patrick! Such talent will certainly not go unrecognized!



Daphné Pierre-Louis graduated in 2014 from the University of Detroit Mercy with a Master's of science in nursing and a major in Family Nurse Practitioner. In spite of a challenging year during which she suffered the loss of her mother, Daphné remained focused on the professional goal she had set for herself. Bravo and best wishes Daph!■

THE FUTURE DOCTORS: MD AND Ph.D.

By Jean-Claude Dutès, Ph.D.

Now that you have met the graduates, watch out for the trail blazers.

All three hold dearly to their Haitian heritage, although they were born outside of Haiti. Raised in Haitian households either in Haiti or in the United States, they carry with them the values that are close to our hearts. Reflecting a collective view on what it means to be Haitian-American or having Haitian roots, one of our future scholars said “my heritage and culture mean a lot to me. Even though I am American by birth, I always consider myself Haitian first and feel a bit offended when people say I am not truly Haitian. I find the traditions and beliefs that my parents have instilled in me as very important. Being Haitian-American provides me with a rich history and culture to be proud of and to aspire to do good for others.” Echoing similar views while expanding on the same theme, another future doctor noted “it means everything to me. My Haitian-American identity gives me a cultural grounding that has been so critical to my social and professional development. I am deeply proud of my culture and look forward to sharing the riches that exist within it through my work.”

Representing the budding flowers of Haitian culture and embodying the hopes that they will match and even surpass the contributions of older generations, their main goal is to seek knowledge in order to be able to be of service to others.

All three, interestingly, came to our colder state from the much warmer state of Florida. Why Michigan, you may ask? No, they don't like cold weather. They came to take advantage of the excellent universities in Michigan. Yes, they came north in search of knowledge. Who are they? Ok now, I can feel the impatience. Just be patient, your reward is in the next sentence.

Being introduced alphabetically are **Melissa Chamblain, Casta Guillaume and Aixa Marchand.**



Of the three, Melissa was the first one to venture into Michigan. She is completing a doctoral degree in Human Medicine at Wayne State University, right here in the Motor City. Casta, who followed her, is doing graduate work in Education and Psychology at the University of Michigan, working towards a Ph.D. degree. Ah, you guessed it, the newest arrival is Aixa. Like Casta, she is also doing graduate work in Education and Psychology and working towards the same degree. Aixa and Casta are not only going to be doctors, but also scholars. While Melissa will treat physical illness, they will attend to our mind and intellect. Highly disciplined, hard-working and dedicated young women, they are sensitive to the plight of others and driven to be of service, not only to just Haitians but to others also. Asked about the most significant factor that affected her decision to become a medical doctor, Melissa said that it was “to help and educate the community about the importance of health” and “ameliorate health care in Haiti.”

For Casta and Aixa, their motivation grew out of their academic and work experiences. Reflecting on her trajectory, Casta recalled that “in my nonprofit work, I noticed a need to apply culturally relevant evidenced based practices to community programming. I wanted to gain the skills to learn how to do this systematically” and “decided to continue to do this training through my Ph.D.”

Aixa at first wanted to get a doctoral degree in clinical psychology and to become a therapist, but after being exposed first hand to research and completing a stint with Teach For America, her interest shifted. She “became interested in how communities and parents influence students’ experiences in schools and how this differentially affect students of color and students of varying ethnicities.”

Being intelligent and nuanced thinkers, they attribute their success to a number of factors. According to Melissa, her success is due to the support of her family and her ability to keep herself motivated. Casta emphasized the value that her parents and family placed on education. Concurring with Melissa and Casta, Aixa added the roles played by mentors and friends.

Consistent with desires to retain their Haitian identity and be active members of the Haitian community in Detroit, all three have participated in HNGD events. Aixa has written an article in this newsletter; Casta has attended several events and Melissa has demonstrated her acting skills in the play “Drame de la Famille Haitienne” that was put on as part of the celebration of father’s day. She is graduating this year and moving forward to complete her residency. On behalf of HNGD and the Haitian Detroit community, we wish you all continued success and thank you for touching our lives with your presence. ■

YEAR IN REVIEW

Addressing a taboo topic in the Haitian community, HNGD initiated a series of lectures on mental health aimed at facilitating a more accurate understanding of mental health and mental illness .

MENTAL HEALTH LECTURE SERIES

By Dr. Marie Soledad Nelson

Mental health issues affect our environment in a number of ways, and the Haitian Community is not immune to this subject. It is a topic that is often not discussed in our community.

In an effort to address some of these issues, The Haitian Network Group of Detroit (HNGD) has scheduled a series of community behavioral health presentations for the year 2014-2015. The program is spearheaded by Jean-Claude Dutès, Ph.D., Licensed Psychologist and Jean Alcé, MD, Board Certified Psychiatrist.

The first presentation "Mental Health Issues affecting Haitian-American children in the US" took place on June 1, 2014 and was sponsored by Marygrove College. This event was attended by members of the Haitian community, with representation from other communities in the Metro Detroit area. Some of the local College and University students were also in attendance.

The presentation was well-received and focused on issues faced by Haitian-American children such as family disruption due to emigration, physical/sexual abuse, divorce, school bullying, peer pressure, undiagnosed learning disability, critical/unsupportive parents and unstable family environment to name a few. The most impressive aspect of the lecture was a number of case studies presented to the audience requiring their participation.

HNGD's aim is to facilitate more dialogue in the Haitian Community on this very important topic. Stay tuned in 2015 for other presentations that will continue to enlighten our community and friends on this significant subject. ■

Father's day offered HNGD another occasion to reach out to and connect with the community.

AN NOU FETE PAPA YO

Reviewed by Aixa Marchand

On June 22nd friends and members of the Haitian Network Group of Detroit (HNGD) assembled to celebrate and honor fathers in the Haitian community and all they do for their families. The event was entitled *An Nou Fete Papa Yo* and we did just that! This event was dynamic and included a panel discussion, personal dedications to fathers, a play,

and a traditional Haitian dinner. All of this wouldn't have been possible without a gracious grant from ESPOIR Haitian American organization who agreed to sponsor this event as well as one additional event that HNGD will host in the upcoming year. The panel-discussion entitled *The Meaning of Fatherhood Across Generations*, was a forum that allowed the audience to hear experiences of fatherhood from a diverse set of Haitian fathers. A common theme that arose was the challenge these fathers faced in raising their children in a society whose culture is very different than our own, all while still instilling Haitian pride and values in their children.

Panel participants included Dr. Jean Alcé, Pierre Richard Lamarre, and Kevin Louis. There was an open forum where audience members were able to ask any of the fathers on the panel questions that may have not been covered, which was moderated by our very own Dr. Jean-Claude Dutès. In addition, numerous members of HNGD tested out their acting skills including Raphaël Bolivar, Mélissa Chamblain, Reynold Charles, Fatima Charles, Fritz Momplaisir, and Dr. Soledad Nelson in the play entitled *Drame de la Famille Haïtienne* written by Dr. Jean-Claude Dutès. This play gave us a glimpse into the relationship between a young Haitian adolescent and the clash between his grandiosity and his father's authoritarianism. With much comedy and truth the story represented what many Haitian immigrants have dealt with upon arrival to the United States. Renewing a cherished tradition, our MC, Ms. Nadine Compère, with ease and grace, read tributes to fathers age seventy or older.

To top off an already wonderful event, a delicious Haitian dinner was served (something that a Haitian-American transplanted from Miami to Ann Arbor doesn't get very often!) This was definitely an event filled with love, family, community, and culture. I look forward to seeing more events like this from HNGD. ■

Panelists: Pierre Richard Lamarre, Dr. Jean Alcé and Kevin Louis



Dr. Nelson as Marie & Reynold Charles as Gérard



Fritz Momplaisir as Paul, Melissa Chamblain as Michele & Reynold Charles as Paul's father, Fatima Charles as Fifi and Raphaël Bolivar as Marc the neighbor



AUDIENCE



In this section, the public is invited to showcase their literary talent by submitting short stories, plays, poems and essays on topics dealing with Haiti or Haitian experiences. Two HNGD members have decided to break the ice and be the first ones to take the plunge.

THE NIGHTMARE

Last night I dreamt of an Island in the Caribbean. Ripe mangoes were falling down while soursops were swinging in the wind. I watched a mule pulling a cartload of sugar cane. I smiled with a lady spreading peanut butter on cassavas. You could hear a rooster crowing and a hen cackling. A parrot was digging an orange while a woodpecker was drilling a palm tree. First, I thought that was Haiti. But suddenly I saw a limousine, a black Mercedes and I doubted that it could be.

Last night I dreamt. It seem so real. The scene was a beach in the Caribbean. Some thirty people were lying down on the sand like a herd of sea-cows. I could observe two girls soaking their feet in the water; one was collecting sea shells, the other one was sifting sand. Some were mixing Rhum and coconut water, others were cooking meat, plantain and breadfruit over coals. Two guitarist were singing "Yellow Bird" while the waves were beating against the rocks. O Yes! I thought that was Haiti. But suddenly appeared a city, an uphill city with some million dollar mansions and I wondered how could it be.

Last night I dreamt of a city in the Caribbean. It was a hot day. But you could feel a gentle breeze coming from the sea. Here, an open market combined all kinds of sounds, all kinds of colours. There, a black and red flag waved over a white gleaming building. I screamed: "This must be Haiti! But immediately I came upon a wedding, a royal kind of wedding; people were pouring champagne over their own heads. I saw a motorcade of Mercedes Benzs' and Jaguars; the cars slowed down to miss a group of skinny beggars. Tears randed down my cheeks and I cried "O Lord, how could this be!"

By Jean-Raphael Bolivar

This year marks the 5th anniversary of the earthquake that left over 300.000 deaths and injured. Ms. Maggy Corkery offers an account of the disruptive effects of the earthquake on the celebration plans of a young woman on her twentieth birthday and the emotional upheaval it unleashed as she became tormented by concerns about her parents and the obsession to find them. In a subtle way, the story makes one think about what is really important in life and what we take for granted until circumstances force us to confront an unwanted reality.

UN JOUR PAS COMME LES AUTRES

6:00am! Le tintamarre habituel de la sonnerie réveilla Mireille. C'était un 12 janvier. Ce matin-là elle avait le cœur léger et le sourire aux lèvres. C'est que, c'était un jour pas comme les autres! On ne fête son 20ème anniversaire qu'une fois dans la vie et elle comptait en profiter pleinement. Mireille s'habilla en fredonnant un air en vogue. Bien qu'elle fût toujours tirée à quatre épingles, elle avait mis encore plus de soin à sa toilette. Avant de quitter sa chambre, elle lança un regard approbateur à la glace et dit à voix haute "Ah oui ma belle! Toi, tu es prête pour ta journée pas comme les autres."

En effet, Mireille était une jeune fille attrayante. Elle avait tout pour plaire. Très élancée, avec un cou gracieux et une taille fine, elle avait l'air d'une nymphe. Ses cheveux auburn cascadaient sur ses épaules en boucles rebelles. Ses yeux en amande étaient bruns et très expressifs. Les éclairs et le soleil y alternaient selon l'émotion qui les animait. Les éclats de rire qui souvent s'échappaient de sa bouche en cœur laissaient voir des dents nacrées. Mireille était particulièrement fière de sa peau fine, couleur chocolat, qui supportait si bien la chaleur du soleil antillais. Malgré ses succès parmi la gente masculine, elle n'était pas arrogante. Elle se faisait des amis très facilement et leur restait fidèle et dévouée. Aussi, ce jour-là avaient-ils prévu un dîner en son honneur, après les cours à la faculté de Droit.

7:00am! Mireille descendit au rez-de-chaussée à la hâte. Il se faisait tard, elle risquait de rater son premier cours! Après avoir rapidement embrassé ses parents, elle avala

(Continued on page 7)

quelques bouchées de son petit déjeuner et partit en criant à -tue-tête qu'elle rentrerait très tard. Elle s'engouffra dans sa voiture comme si elle avait le diable à ses trousses. En dépit du bouchon monstre sur la route du Bois Verna, le trajet vers la Fac se passa sans accroche. Aucun policier en vue, donc pas de contravention. Ah! La journée s'annonçait bien!

8:00am! Une fois la voiture garée, Mireille traversa à grands pas la cour et les couloirs de la Fac. Elle ouvrit avec précaution la porte vétuste de la grande salle. Quelle guigne! Le professeur Germain avait déjà entamé son exposé sur l'éthique professionnelle. Elle se faufila dans la dernière rangée où son amie lui avait réservé un siège. Elles échangèrent un sourire chaleureux avant de plonger avec assiduité dans l'univers des plaidoiries et des chicanes juridiques.

Les heures s'étaient écoulées avec une lenteur exaspérante. Toute la journée, entre les "Joyeux Anniversaire", les "Meilleurs Vœux" et les "on va bien s'éclater ce soir", Mireille avait eu du mal à se concentrer sur ses cours. Elle s'imaginait comment la fête prévue pour 7 heures se déroulerait. Une trentaine d'étudiants prêts à se défouler après une journée passée à piocher dans les bouquins et à se creuser les méninges. Les boissons couleraient à flot, le dîner serait exquis puisque la soirée aurait lieu à l'Hôtel Montana où se trouvait l'un des meilleurs restaurants de Port-au-Prince. Au fil des heures, les rires et les pitreries prendraient de l'ampleur. Puis, avec la musique entraînante du groupe Troubadour, commencerait la danse qui durerait jusqu'à l'aube. Ah oui! Il y avait de quoi désorienter la plus appliquée des étudiantes.

4:00pm! Le moment tant attendu était finalement arrivé. Les cours avaient pris fin. Mireille et ses amis s'étaient rassemblés dans la cour de la Fac, sous un manguier en fleurs. Une douce brise rafraîchissait les briques de la cour surchauffées à blanc par le soleil ardent. Les branches de l'arbre se balançaient légèrement au rythme du vent et donnaient aux étudiants une sensation de bien-être après une journée ardue. Ils se consultèrent sur la route à emprunter pour éviter les embouteillages et atteindre l'Hôtel Montana le plus rapidement possible. Puis, ils s'engouffrèrent dans leurs voitures respectives avec un tapage incroyable créé par des voix tonitruantes qui chantaient "Joyeux Anniversaire à notre chère Mireille!"

4: 30pm! Mireille commençait à pester contre les automobilistes et les piétons qui l'empêchaient d'avancer rapidement. Il y avait tant de monde sur cette sacrée Avenue des Dalles qu'elle n'arriverait jamais à l'heure!

Malgré ce qui avait été convenu, elle décida de changer de parcours et prit la route du Canapé- Vert. Elle s'avait à quoi s'en tenir en ce qui concernait le flot de la circulation, puisqu'elle habitait dans le coin.

4:40pm! Ouf! Ça avançait finalement. Mireille venait juste de dépasser la rue qui menait à la maison de ses parents. Un léger sourire lui était venu en pensant à eux. Ils étaient des parents modèles qui avaient tout fait pour assurer son bonheur. La veille, ils lui avaient offert comme cadeau un voyage en Europe. Attendrie, sa gorge se noua pendant quelques secondes. Elle passa devant l'hôpital où elle était née il y a vingt ans. Cela faisait tout de même un bon bout de temps! L'immeuble pimpant et très accueillant avec ses murs fraîchement repeints avait encore bonne mine. Encore quelques minutes et elle atteindrait sa destination.

4: 53pm! Brusquement, un bruit de tonnerre se fit entendre et la voiture de Mireille se souleva du sol et retomba avec fracas. Croyant qu'elle avait été accrochée par un automobiliste imprudent, Mireille lâcha un juron sonore. Elle regarda autour d'elle et vit que toutes les autres voitures avaient suivi le même trajectoire. Il y eut un silence qui parut interminable, puis un "boom" effroyable. Tollé général! Cris perçants! Appels au secours! des gens couraient affolés et apeurés, alors que les maisons s'effondraient avec fracas. Un nuage de poussière épaisse avait enveloppé le quartier. D'abord désorientée, Mireille avait finalement compris ce qui se passait. **Un tremblement de terre! En Haïti?**

Impossible... Et pourtant, l'effrayante réalité le confirmait.

Mireille n'eut qu'une pensée "Mon Dieu! Mes parents!" Impossible de faire demi-tour, la rue était encombrée de voitures et le sol était jonché de débris hétéroclites. La terreur qui se peignait sur les visages, les cris, les pleurs des enfants, la dévastation, rien ne l'atteignait. Elle n'avait qu'une pensée en tête: ses parents. Elle courut à perdre haleine, fixée sur son but. Lorsque finalement elle arriva chez elle, ils étaient là, sains et saufs. Accrochés l'un à l'autre, ils se tenaient immobiles devant la demeure familiale. Par miracle, la bâtisse avait tenu le coup sous la secousse. Les voisins n'avaient pas été aussi chanceux. En apercevant ses parents, qui tout à coup semblaient avoir vieilli d'une dizaine d'années, Mireille poussa un cri perçant où passaient en même temps l'horreur, l'effroi et le soulagement. Elle se jeta dans leurs bras en sanglotant et répéta en maintes fois "Aujourd'hui est vraiment un jour pas comme les autres."■



PLAY SYNOPSIS

Haitian immigrants had decided to reunite their families and have brought their children to New York. The parents thought they were doing a good thing. What they hope for is not what transpired. This sketch is about a family's effort to cope with the transition from one culture to another, the clash between adolescence grandiosity and a father authoritarianism and loyalty to his cultural ways. It is also about growth, the love of a father and a son's realization, as an adult, of the depth of his father's love as they reminisced about a fight twenty years earlier.

It is the early 70's, somewhere in a working class neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York. A father and mother wait for their children to come home from a party. The father is concerned that they are not yet home. He engages the mother in a discussion about Haitian teenagers' customs, criticizing their manners, clothing and slavish adoptions of American ways. Getting upset as he talked, his wife tries to calm him down. This gets him more infuriated. The wife trying to calm him down invites him to go bed. For him, that would be irresponsible. He cannot understand how his wife would want to go to bed before the children get home. She leaves him in the living room and goes to bed. Alone he bemoans life in New York. He is hurt and angry, believing that the city has twisted the mind of his children.

In come the children, elated and excited about their night out. Paul greets his father saying "hi." The father takes this a sign of disrespect and confronts Paul. Michele, Paul's sister tries to calm things down. Paul admonishes his sister for caving to their father's whims. The mother and the neighbors hearing the raucous walk into the living room to see what is going on. The male neighbor takes Paul aside and tries to reason with him. Paul is offended, feeling that he over reached and was patronizing, giving him advice without really knowing him. Feeling indignant and offended, he went into a rant about the hypocrisy of adult life and their mixed communications.

Hearing Paul's rant, the father felt he was disrespected in his home and threatened to send Paul back to Haiti. Before doing so, he wants to give him a whipping. Paul refusing to back down taunts his father, who went inside his room to come out with a belt. At this point, Paul leaves the home to the dismay and consternation of everyone. Leaving he makes some statement boasting of his freedom and telling everyone that he can do it on his own. The pleadings of the others, except for the father who remains silent, fall on deaf ears. Paul is gone; he has left home.

20 years later Paul and his father are sitting together. Paul brought up the subject. He tells his father about what happened to him after he left their home that night. He had gone to a friend's home. In the morning the friend's moth-

er told him that she did not have enough means to support two boys. He was shocked and panicked, not knowing what to do. The next day his mother came by and snuck him back into the home. For about a year, he avoided his father while living at home.

During that conversation, he learned that his father knew he was in the home all of the time and that it was he who sent his mother to get and bring him back home. Paul was shocked. He could not believe his father back then would have done something like that. The father explained that he had some moral (psychological) assistance. He had gone to see one of the Haitian priests who provided counseling to members of the Haitian community about anything and everything. He explained that his meetings with the priest helped to see things differently. He told Paul you were insolent, but a good kid. Paul was shocked, he could not believe that the father he knew then was capable of something like that, of letting him live under his roof after what he had said that night. The father looking at him replies with the old Haitian saying: "breasts are never too heavy for their owner," and after a brief pause adds "but she must know how to carry them." Such is father's love! ■

KREYOL PALE, KREYOL KONPRANN

Proverbs are capsules of wisdom in which a people stores centuries of experiences and lessons that they use to educate and counsel. They are what makes us human; our capacity for self-reflection and change, based on past learning and experience.

Proverbs are a human phenomenon that is found in all cultures. Let's take the case of Haiti, where the culture has generated proverbs in language that is sometimes both colorful and poignant.

Have you ever heard or read those pearls of wisdom? "**Dèyè'w won, ou vie pete kare,**" which pertains to unbridled ambitions and or impatience in a person with limited resources. It is also about being able to accept wisely what one cannot change.

Here is another one that captures the seeming inequity in the distribution of wealth, beauty etc. and the apparent unfairness of life: "**Bondye konn bay, men li pa konn separe.**" Translated loosely "God is generous but he is not even in his generosity".

While one proverb counsels patience and acceptance, others like "**Mache chèche, pa dòmi san soupe**" encourage actions as opposed to passivity. Again, when translated loosely we have "seek and you shall find."

And reflecting on the mechanisms of betrayal common in human experiences, we have "Si lakay pa bay, deyò pa ka achte." Basically betrayal comes from within.

Can you think of others? Please forward them with your translations and interpretations to us. Perhaps, yours may be chosen for inclusion in the next newsletter. ■

FROM THE EDITOR

Dr. Jean-Claude Dutès



REFLECTIONS ON A YEAR FRAUGHT WITH DISTRESSING ANNIVERSARIES

Finally you are looking at the latest edition of the HNGD Newsletter. Due to growing pains and a dynamic set of circumstances, it is out later than expected. Now that you have flipped through the pages, read one of the articles or looked at the pictures, we hope that you have so far found the newsletter engaging. We have included new sections and hope that it will be both informative and entertaining.

2014 was a productive year, with moments of distress and elation. We grieved the passing of friends and families, celebrated the academic and professional achievements of our children, grandchildren, family members and friends and proudly took note of the election of the first Haitian American to the US congress: Ms. Mia Love. While we have no doubt that her job is to represent her Utah constituency, and not Haiti or Haitian American interests, we cannot be any less touched by this outstanding accomplishment. In many ways her election elevates us all, as it is, in part at least, a validation of the values that our parents instilled in us. Among those is the belief that we see and know no limitations and that hard work always pays in the end. We dare to dream and to achieve the seemingly impossible. Isn't that the message of our victory over the French forces of Napoleon Bonaparte, of being the first and only people to have successfully thrown off the shackles of slavery and dared to affirm the dignity of human beings? Haitians and not the English were the first ones to say "no" to slavery and to offer a beacon of hope to all held in bondage. We dared to say no to the exchange of men and women as chattels, but the price was heavy and we are still paying it. Ostracized and bullied in the 19th century, demeaned and ridiculed in the twentieth century and confused and misled in the twenty first century, the Haitian people inexorably continue their march toward true freedom.

2015, unlike 2014, is a year heavy with distressing emotions for us of Haitian ancestry. Most Haitians lost or had at least a member of their family injured in the devastating earthquake of January 12, 2010. This year marks the fifth anniversary of that disaster. For all who care about Haiti and her people it is a difficult period. For some, it is a time for mourning while for others it is a moment for reflection and to take stock of where we are, of how far we have come in the rebuilding process.

2015 is also a painful reminder of the stains on our glorious past; it is an anniversary of shame. On July 28th 1915, Haiti lost its independence and has not yet regained it; 100 years later we are again under occupation. While the iron shackles have disappeared, the self-hatred inherent in the mental conditioning associated with slavery continues to keep us in a mentally subservient state that undermines the fulfillment of our ideals.

We are down but not out. The successes of the Haitian diaspora in this country, and the continuing effort of the people who are in Haiti to establish democracy there, are auspicious of a brighter future for the Haitian people and the refurbishing of Haiti's image. Emerging from the tortured state of slavery, the learning curve has been steeped, and we have and continue to make mistakes, but we are learning from them, and with time we will be on our feet again.

Let us embrace both our glory and our shame so that we can correct our paths. The past is prologue they say, or as psychologists like to herald 'past behaviors are the best predictors of future behaviors.' If we did it once, we can do it again. HNGD will continue to educate through its programming, construct bridges with other communities and work toward highlighting the commonalities that made the 1804 consensus possible. Let us strive to make 2015 the year of renewal, the year we begin to turn the impossible into the attainable, once again.

Happy New Year 2015, and may your labor bring you the fruits and rewards that fill your dreams. ■

Dr. Jean-Claude Dutès

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ESPOIR: WE REMEMBER

By Margareth Corkery and
Dr. Jean-Claude Dutès



Organizations come and go. Some leave no traces of their existence, while others leave lasting impressions through the breadth of their contributions. ESPOIR is one those organizations whose impact is likely to be felt for generations. Since its inception, it has not only contributed to the improvement of the physical and mental health of the people of Haiti, but it has also supported community activities here in Detroit. Sadly, as of last year, ESPOIR ceased to exist as an organization.

We seldom hear about the good that men and women do. As Shakespeare wrote in Julius Caesar “the good is oft interred with their bones.” Out of gratitude for the support the organization has provided in its lifetime, we wanted to highlight ESPOIR's accomplishments and recognize the board members for their hard work. Following in alphabetical order are the names of the individuals who served on the board prior to the organization's dissolution: Dr. Jean Alcé, Margareth Corkery, Carole Keller and Dr. Guérin Montilus.

ESPOIR, which means hope in French, was founded in 1986 by a group of concerned Haitian-Americans and African Americans living in Michigan. Following the deposition of the dictator Jean Claude Duvalier, the group looked to Haiti with renewed hope for her future. The founding members wanted to assist the Haitian people while also supporting and preserving Haiti's proud history and rich culture.

While ESPOIR's early efforts consisted of shipping medical supplies to Haiti, it has also supported others' work. In 1989, Espoir provided Eyecare-Haiti, a health organization working on blindness prevention, the opportunity to raise thousands of dollars for funding its work by selling authentic Haitian art to the Detroit community. Responding to the 2010 earthquake, ESPOIR donated \$5,000 to Haiti Outreach Mission (HOM) to be used for medical supplies. HOM subsequently also received additional donations to support its efforts in Haiti. That same month, ESPOIR organized a highly successful benefit for the rebuilding of the Sainte Trinité Music School in Port-au-Prince. Helping to strengthen mental health services and education in Haiti, ESPOIR partly funded mental health services to nursing students at the Faculté des Sciences Infirmières de Léogane (FSIL) de l'Université Épisopale d'Haïti in 2012 and 2013. In the same vein, ESPOIR also sponsored two educational presentations in 2013 and 2014 for students at the state university and mental health professionals.

ESPOIR's work has not solely been directed toward efforts in Haiti. In the past, it provided legal assistance to Haitian

refugees seeking political asylum in the Miami area. Locally, ESPOIR has focused on promoting Haitian culture and Caribbean and Africana traditions within the Detroit community, through a variety of educational, cultural, and charitable activities. The list of local and international entities that have recently benefitted from ESPOIR's largesse is extensive: Haitian Network Group of Detroit, Haiti Outreach Mission, Sacred Heart Church Haiti Program, Caribbean Carnival and Cultural Organization, Caribbean Family Picnic, Wayne State University CLAAS Program, Sœurs de St. Michel de Nippe School, St. Louis-Marie de Monfort orphanage, Ste. Marguerite School, Friends of Music Education for Haiti, Mental Health Professionals United for Haiti, Fonkoze, Lambi Fund, Santiago de Cuba Hurricane Relief, IFCO, MEDICC and Partners in Progress.

We at HNGD are grateful to ESPOIR for its wonderful sense of humanity and generosity through the years and, especially, for its ability to introduce light into obscurity and transform hope into vision. ■

OUR GRATITUDE

Gratitude is one of the least articulate of the emotions, especially when it is deep. — Felix Frankfurter

Over the years, the Haitian Network Group of Detroit has benefitted from the support of many in the community. Although we cannot possibly name all those who have contributed to the longevity of the organization, we would like to acknowledge two individuals who have helped us shine and attain our goals on more than one occasion:

Dr. Karen Davis Dimanche and Maggy Moïse-Thomas.

Dr. Davis Dimanche is a fixture in the Haitian community; she has put her exceptional oratory skills at the service of HNGD on numerous occasions. Additionally, over the years she has facilitated our access to the Mary Grove College campus where we were able to hold many of our signature events.

Mrs. Moïse-Thomas, on the other hand is a resident of Maryland; yet, for the past decade she has been volunteering her time from afar by creating flyers for some of our projects, designing and managing HNGD's new website and most recently, by helping with the layout of the current issue of *Zanmi Detroit*.

Ladies your dedication to HNGD has not gone unnoticed and we would like to express our gratitude and salute you both for your unwavering commitment! ■
