



bean, it was his protection against real, potential and even imagined enemies. And finally there was voodoo, the ancient African religion that played such an important part in not only the post-Duvalier period, but in the entire Haitian experience. For generations, it has served as the unique filter through which many Haitians view and experience the world.

Much of the story's action takes place in Jérémie, an ancient port city in the southern peninsula. Known to many as the *City of Poets*, the location is important, not only because it was the home of such notable poets as Alexandre Dumas and Emile Roumer, but because, historically, it has also been known for its high concentration of voodoo practitioners, maybe the highest in all of Haiti. Many of the *Voodoo Wars* described in the book actually took place in Jérémie.

Redemption is an important sub-theme of my novel. Because of his grievous sins and lack of repentance, redemption is impossible for Jacques. Although there is hope for Sonny, absolution ultimately proves difficult for him, as it does for the nation itself. Haiti's own future may have been foretold by the unfortunate ends met by its revolutionary triumvirate: Toussaint Louverture, Jean-Jacques Dessalines and Henri Christophe, comrades-in-arms in the 1791 slave revolution and the nation's first three presidents. Some believe the early and miserable deaths of these icons may have created the bad Karma that caused the unending cycle of disasters, coups, presidential murders and political power struggles that have plagued the ill-fated nation and its leaders.

Although I have written about the Caribbean in the past, authoring a novel about Haiti presented new challenges. Because my West-Indian family and social ties are principally in Trinidad, Martinique and Guadeloupe, and because I have only been in Haiti once some years ago, I had to fill in my knowledge gaps with extensive research. In addition to reading numerous books, research papers and periodicals on Haitian culture and history, I interviewed many Haitians. Even though my book is written in English, the dialog frequently incorporates Kreyòl. Since I am not a native speaker, I had to enlist Haitian expertise to ensure the proper phrasing.

Despite many challenges and a steep learning curve, writing *The Bones of Louverture* was a most enriching and rewarding project. I met new people and formed relationships within the Haitian Diaspora that I will always treasure. And I hope my novel will help my granddaughter to better understand and appreciate her Caribbean roots. I am most fortunate to have had the opportunity to write the book.

You can find out more about me and my writing from my [website](#) and my [blog](#). All of my books are accessible through my website. When the *Bones of Louverture* is published, I will announce it in the website. ■

CALLING THE MIDWEST HOME...

*Serge JC Pierre-Louis, MD, MPH
President, DuSable Heritage*



The DHA Board, from left to right: Nicolas Paul, Etzer Cantave, Marie Josee St. Preux (Treasurer), Courtney Pierre Joseph (Secretary), Serge JC Pierre-Louis (President), Frantz Dossous

Last year in September 2018, I travelled to Cleveland OH to attend the One World Festival at the Cleveland Gardens, upon the invitation of a group of friends living there. As I drove from Chicago, I wondered why I did not know about that festival having lived in Cleveland for six years. The festival itself was a true celebration of diversity where various ethnic groups representing different countries paraded along beautifully kept gardens and monuments, while displaying their music and national costumes and sharing their cuisine with visitors. Our small group of a dozen coming from Toledo, Detroit, Chicago and beyond proudly waived Haitian flags.

When we sat down later at a Dominican restaurant for dinner, it became obvious to us that our getting together was actually the most important part of the day. Why did we not know about each other, after being in the Midwest for so long? We pledged to keep in touch and to visit each other in our home states as much as possible. I extended an invitation to the group to attend our annual DuSable Heritage Gala in March 2019 in Chicago.

Over the following weeks, I had the pleasure of conversing with members and leaders of several Haitian organizations in Detroit MI, Columbus OH, Indianapolis IN and Louisville KY representing microcosms of Haitian culture across the Midwest. They all had one goal in common, to maintain a bond between themselves and with their culture. On 9 March 2019, we were fortunate to receive at our gala in Chicago two prominent leaders of the *Haitian Networking Group of Detroit (HNGD)* namely Margareth Corkery and Shirley Alce Konate, respectively President and Vice-President of that organization. We also welcomed representatives from Cleveland, Toledo, Milwaukee and Indianapolis.

About 250 years ago, a Haitian man made the journey from St. Marc to Illinois, married a local

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