

**INSIDE THIS ISSUE:**

- In This Issue 1
- President's Notes 2
- Unsung Heroes 2-3
- Team Work 3
- Bel Bagay Lakay Recap 4-6
- History Section 7-8
- Election Results 7
- Community News and Events 7-10
- Achievement 11
- The Literary Corner 12
- Our Sponsors 12

**Editor:** Dr. Jean-Claude Dutès  
**Layout Editor:** Maggy Moise-Thomas

*Zanmi Detroit is published by the Haitian Network Group of Detroit, whose mission is to promote Haitian culture and provide a forum for Haitians and friends to network.*

Please e-mail questions or comments to the HNGD:  
**Info@hngd.org**

**Zanmi Detroit**  
**Haitian Network Group of Detroit**  
 60 East Milwaukee  
 PO Box 2106  
 Detroit, MI 48202  
  
**WWW.HNGD.ORG**

# Zanmi Detroit



**IN THIS ISSUE...**



Hello Dear Friends,

This year is inexorably merging into another as the night blends into the day without any visible delineation point. On your computer screen or in your hand is the newest issue of Zanmi Detroit. By now, you know what to expect, so while I am going to be quick, I just want to give you a brief heads-up.

Zami Detroit introduces you to our unsung heroes, the people who are behind the scene, toiling tirelessly without pay or recognition to make HNGD what it is today. While they have never held office, and some don't even live in Michigan, they have worked with great dedication at various tasks out of a spirit of service. Zanmi Detroit and HNGD thank them for their altruism and the lessons in selflessness, sense of community and dedication to Haiti that their actions never cease to teach us.

Professor Chinaea offers us a look at the impact of Haiti, Haitians and the Haitian Revolution on the Spanish colony of Puerto Rico in the latter part of the 18th to the middle of the 19th century. Zanmi Detroit thanks him for educating us about the implications of the birth of Haiti and the fears it evoked in colonial powers. Regine touches us again with one of her reflective pieces

through a story focusing on gratitude and growth after a personal crisis. Zanmi Detroit is sure many who have read her pieces have found them uplifting. Our way of saying thanks to Regine is to ask her to keep writing and sharing. In another inspirational tale, Dr. Gadini O. Delisca recounts the path that took him from Haiti to medical school in the United States. In two articles, and with pictures, we invite you to relive the electrifying experience of the Bel Bagail festival.

HNGD's effort to reach out to the Bahamian in Bahamas and the Haitian community in that country in the aftermath of the destructive hurricane last summer is also chronicled. Last but not least, the Global Health Initiative updates us about its work sustaining health care in Haiti while the Melanin Collective Girls' project and Prim and Prosper, Inc. describe their programs for promoting personal growth in young women.

That is all!

**Happy reading and have a wonderful holiday season, with our best wishes for the new year!**

Jean-Claude Dutès, Ph.D.  
 Editor ■



## PRESIDENT'S NOTES

### INVISIBLE YET POWERFUL: THE SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY



Every publication of the *Zanmi Detroit* Newsletter offers an opportunity to reflect upon this organization, its successes and shortcomings and whether the board at the helm of this ship is adhering to HNGD's mission while making sure that it remains relevant to the community it serves.

Generally, the word "community" evokes a physical location. When people speak of their community, it refers to a place, a neighborhood or a town in which they live. However, there are times when that primary notion of community goes beyond an actual location where a group of people live and involves something much less public but as dynamic; something that comes from within and allows individuals to connect with one another, find a common goal and get actively involved to ensure they reach that goal.

Community in this sense is not something that one fits into by happenstance; rather, it is the result of a conscious decision made through a process of exploration. In those instances, the physical location becomes no longer necessary for people of different background, race or nationality to feel that they are part of a community; part of something that has become so important to them that they are willing to invest time, energy and resources to ensure that the common objective is achieved. Such is the case for the HNGD Community. ■

Celebrating Twenty Years of Service

Haitian Network Group of Detroit

**HNGD**  
INSPIRATION THROUGH DIVERSITY

20th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

**Saturday, December 14, 2019**  
St. John's Banquet and Conference Center  
22001 Northwestern Hwy  
Southfield, MI 48075

Tickets: \$55 per person  
7:00 PM Cocktail Hour  
8:00 PM Dinner 1:9:00 PM Dancing  
\*Cash Bar\*

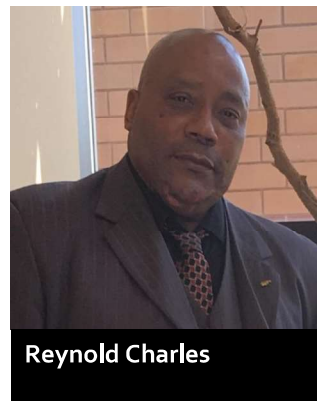
WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

Lifetime Achievement Award to be presented to  
Professor Guérin Chapsal Montilus in partnership with the  
Wayne State University Department of Anthropology,  
the Center for Latino/a and Latin American Studies,  
and the Department of African American Studies

Purchase tickets online by December 1, 2019  
[www.haitiannetworkdetroit.org](http://www.haitiannetworkdetroit.org)  
For more information call 248-514-6494

## RECOGNIZING OUR UNSUNG HEROES

Amid the chaos that usually takes place while planning an event the magnitude of the Bèl Bagay Lakay festival, it's inevitable that we will find some unsung heroes; these invisible engines that worked silently, although tirelessly, to help keep the wheels of the machine in motion and insure that the festival goes off without a hitch. These unsung heroes are numerous, and they don't get enough credit for their contribution. This is my opportunity to tip my hat off to three individuals, a Michigander and two out-of-towners who refuse to allow distance to keep them from playing a part in the success of our organization. When it comes to Bèl Bagay Lakay, **Reynold Charles, Carmina Mevs and Maggy Moïse Thomas** have given their 100%; even when it seemed that there was nothing left to be given!



Reynold Charles

With his lively voice and *joie de vivre*, Reynold is the eternal cheerleader. No matter the request, he always answers "yes!". When we needed someone to bring some animation to the Farmington Founder's Parade, Reynold was there. When we reached out to him about participating in the festival's *Rara* parade, not only did he enlist others, but he was there front row, with his "grage" (traditional percussion instrument), singing the popular lyrics at the top of his lungs. A high regard for teamwork is one of Reynold's strongest qualities. Since the first Bèl Bagay Lakay festival he has been there providing precious manpower to transport and help install the panels used by the artists to showcase their work. The day after the festival, when everyone had returned to their regular routines, Reynold reported to the venue *pipirit chantan*" (early in the morning) to load the rented pick-up, return the sound equipment to the store and drop off the panels in Belleville. One may think it's an easily done task; try doing this after having spent the previous two days on your feet dancing and helping wherever you are needed! Better yet, try doing all this with an injured foot, which was the case for him this year! Then you will fully understand this unsung hero's personal philosophy about teamwork.

Closely following is the second unsung hero, Carmina. My dear niece from New Jersey, the powerhouse behind *Get Results with Carmina Mevs*, who not only sponsors the Bèl Bagay Lakay festival, but also flies down here at her own ex-

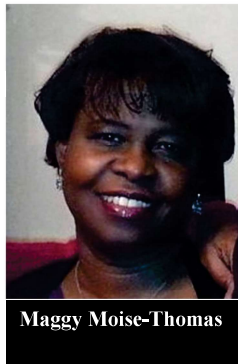
Continued on next page



Carmina Mevs

pense to lend us a hand as the Volunteer and Event Coordinator. Carmina's consistent attention to details gives her work the mark of excellence. She tirelessly delivers quality performance; whether managing major or minor tasks, she made big things happen. In 2017, this multitalented young woman managed to put some time aside to learn in one day a folkloric dance routine for which she and Jinette Chapman received a nod in the Farmington Press. This year Carmina did not disappoint us either! Check-out the video of the *Rara* Parade on the HNGD website. You can't miss her energetic performance as one of the Rara queens leading the parade alongside her counterpart, Jinette and under the direction of Gérald Joanis. Sponsor, Event and Volunteer Coordinators, dancer... Is there any role Carmina won't fulfill to help HNGD remain on top of its game?

And then, there is the third unsung hero. The one who personifies commitment: Maggy MT from Maryland. Her commitment pushed her to donate and sacrifice endless hours for the good of the organization. In her quiet but assertive way, Maggy MT has helped us with everything HNGD. Website designer/administrator and Newsletter Format Editor are just a few of the tasks that she has undertaken over the past 6 years. Although she is miles away, Maggy MT is our go-to person for any computer related issues. A strong believer in the work that we do, she always responds to our frequent calls for help with the same good humor and pleasant disposition. When it comes to Bèl Bagay Lakay Maggy MT is one of our strongest supporters. She has attended two of the three festivals at her own expense. In 2015, she paved the way for HNGD to receive a grant from the FOKAL Foundation in Haiti. This year, her unbridled enthusiasm attracted her family as well as visitors from West Virginia and Florida to the Bèl Bagay Lakay festival.



Maggy Moise-Thomas

Whether they receive credit or not, teamwork, consistent excellence and commitment are the qualities that make these three unsung heroes stand out. Silently but steadily, they have supported HNGD's vision for a number of years. Behind every great organization there are greater supporters. With folks like Reynold, Carmina and Maggy MT in HNGD's corner, the sky is the limit! We can never thank you enough for all that you do. ■

## TEAM WORK

### REFLECTIONS ON HNGD'S TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY



By Rosario Danier



Twenty years of existence is a great accomplishment. It is a success story built on perseverance and hard work with the help of dedicated members and excellent leadership. We salute those who committed their time and effort over so many years.

The work that we did as an organization impacted many lives. We responded to Haiti's natural disasters by providing direct financial support. We

funded scholarship programs for nursing students, and we promoted Haitian culture through a series of activities.

As we continue to evolve to meet the challenges of tomorrow, we are continuously reminded that the degree of our success is limited only by the motivation and engagement of our members. Collectively, we can achieve so much more than we can ever realize individually. Martin Luther King said it best:

“An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity.”

We do understand that time is scarce, priorities are set, resources are limited but we are reminded that an organization cannot exist without its members nor should the work lie on the shoulders of just a few. We offer HNGD as a forum to share your compassion, participate in a worthy cause, and shape the future of a community. You are not alone in this world. You cannot do it all by yourself nor can we as an organization advance without you. The work that we do is more important now than ever. Your presence is needed. The challenges ahead are far more numerous and consequential.

As we celebrate this moment, Haiti is going through another political upheaval, one that offers limited to no avenue for intervention from our end. But we would be remiss if we did not offer our prayers, sympathies and encouragement to persevere to our compatriots at home.

Haiti, an island tired of calling for help: Your children are held captive to mental paradigms and economic and political conditions that condemn them to a life of hardship: We hear you!

Haiti, darling, we cannot visit now nor can we participate in this particular struggle, but you will always be in our thoughts and prayers and we send you our best wishes for a speedy return to stability. See you soon! ■

## BEL BAGAY LAKAY RECAP

### BEL BAGAY LAKAY FESTIVAL 2019, A VIBRANT CELEBRATION OF HAITIAN CULTURE

*By Serge JC Pierre-Louis*

What a delight it was to attend for the first time the Bel Bagay Lakay Festival, this unique event put together every two years by Haitian Network Group of Detroit (HNGD) during the last week of July! Together with Nicolas Paul, I represented the Board of DuSable Heritage Association based in Chicago.

The festivities started on Friday July 26 at the Royal Oak Grille, in the charming town of Royal Oak. I arrived from Chicago on time, and joined by Nick from Cleveland, we met with the sponsors of the festival for drinks and a lavish buffet. As the evening progressed, the laughter grew increasingly louder especially when old friends from medical school in Haiti bumped into each other after three or four decades. It also became obvious that Haitians were scattered across the American Midwest, sharing the same weather and the same challenges, without knowing about each other's existence. We talked about the different groups in Cleveland, Columbus, Indianapolis, Louisville and Chicago as though they were all connected by an invisible thread...the same thread that led us all to Detroit for a weekend of discovery. That evening Nick and I reflected on all this, as we improvised a midnight buffet at our hotel with mini ice cream, cookies and sodas.

The next day, on Saturday evening, the festival officially opened in Farmington right in the public square where guests could browse under large tents filled with a kaleidoscope of Haitian art to include a panoply of paintings, gift cards, flat-iron sculptures, embroidered vodou bottles and flags, hand-made bracelets and the like. There we met officials from the City of Farmington and the official representative of the Haitian Consulate in Chicago as well as friends from Florida; we later had dinner at a nearby Greek restaurant with newly arrived friends from Cleveland and Toledo. HNGD delivered a rich program of music with J. Perry who rocked the crowd, folk dances with young girls and boys, fashion show with innovative outfits by Soledad Couture and surreal storytelling by the unquestionably talented Charlot Lucien from Boston who captured the imagination of children and young adults alike. Several local residents drifted in and out of the park, some with their traditional Asian outfits, wondering what these Haitians were all about. The evening ended, of course, with nostalgic Haitian Kompa music orchestrated by skillful DJ Montplaisir. Later, Nick and I returned to the midnight buffet at the hotel, a small compensation since we had missed again the daily complimentary reception and happy hour earlier that afternoon.

The final day, Sunday, was a continuation of cultural activities which included a talented dancer from Jacmel and a live band. The weak link, unfortunately, was the avidly-expected Haitian food which did not meet expectations. Fortunately,

we ended at the house of one of Nick's friends where we enjoyed a truly typical meal. He introduced us to his Haitian wife, his Haitian-American son and his American daughter-in-law in a melting pot that resembled the rice and beans, fried chicken and plantains, grilled corn, macaroni and salad that they served us and that we washed down with wine and beer. I made it alone to the midnight buffet that evening as Nick had left for Cleveland, after we bid farewell to our friends at HNGD.

As I drove back to Chicago on Monday morning, I was still under the spell of the festival and felt grateful to Maggy Corkery, Shirley Alce-Konate and the leadership of HNGD for their indefatigable work. How did HNGD manage to bring so much Haitian culture in one little corner of the Midwest? I had met new and old friends, discovered new art and new artists, discussed professional collaboration with new colleagues and, more importantly, shared an aspect of Haitian culture that the world knows so little about. Together with DuSable Heritage Association, I look forward to joining hands with HNGD and other Haitian organizations in the Midwest to assure the success of the next Bel Bagay Lakay Festival. ■

### HOME CELEBRATION AWAY FROM HOME

*By Marie-Christine Theodore*

A fun filled cultural celebration with vibrant snippets of Haitian arts, crafts, music, and dances, while surrounded by good company in a welcoming community. This was my overall impression of the *Bel Bagay lakay* fair this summer. My first time attending this event. I must admit that it was a bit personal for me. It was a reunion of sorts with family and childhood friends. But that such a reunion happened in an event that celebrates one's birth culture was certainly a nice bonus.

While I enjoyed the event, I still think there was room for improvement to make the next fair an even better experience. Next time, I'd like to see more food vendors to better showcase the deliciousness and variety of Haitian cuisine and treats. In addition, it would be nice to have Haitian food offered for the whole duration of the fair instead of just 1 day. Also, I think that some arts and crafts items were on the pricey side. I'd like to see items offered at a wider range of prices to accommodate all purse sizes, with emphasis on the smaller ones. More affordable prices might be a good way to spur the interest of newbies into our *bèl bagay* from home.

Lastly, I'm a bit disappointed that this fair occurs every 2 years. *A la bèl bagay si se te chak ane*. Looking forward to the next one. ■

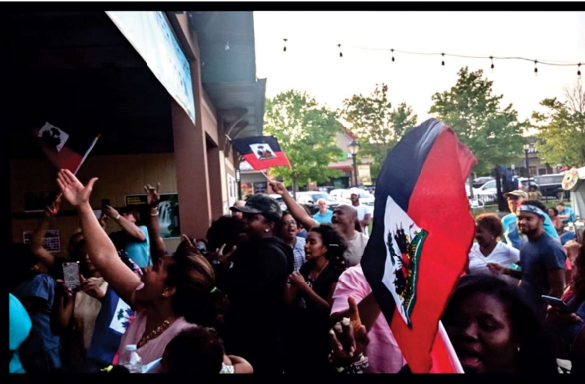
Continued on next page



Mr. Gerald Joanis, professional dancer from Jacmel, Haïti, leading the Rara parade



Mr. Gerald Joanis, professional dancer



PERFORMER J. PERRY ENTERTAINING THE CROWD



Ms. Jinette Chapman and the junior dancers



Story Teller, Charlot Lucien



# HISTORY SECTION



## “BETWEEN THE SPECTER OF RACE WAR AND ECONOMIC EXPLOITATION: HAITI, THE HAITIAN REVOLUTION AND HAITIANS IN SPANISH COLONIAL PUERTO RICO, C. 1791-1850”

BY PROFESSOR JORGE L. CHINEA, WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY



Dr. China.

Last February we reported on a Black History Month presentation led by Wayne State University professor Victor Figueroa on the Haitian Revolution in the Caribbean literary imaginary. At the forum, we learned about how different writers across the Caribbean spoke and wrote about the largest and most successful slave revolt in the Americas, and possibly the world! They invariably based their observations on primary documents, newspapers, biographies, diaries, travelogues, historical accounts and other valuable sources, and interpreted the information from their unique personal and political prism. They might have also heard stories of planters, merchants, government functionaries, soldiers or mariners from various places in the Caribbean who shared first-hand information about what they saw, lived through or participated in during those tumultuous times.

In this brief piece we explore how Haiti, Haitians and the Haitian Revolution influenced affairs in Spanish colonial Puerto Rico during the years 1791-1850. Thousands of residents of the war-torn colony of St. Domingue began fleeing hastily across the border to Spanish Santo Domingo, or embarked to Cuba, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, the Lesser Antilles, Venezuela and the United States with their relatives, servants, enslaved workers and material possessions. While many of the refugees self-identified as white, a significant number of them was comprised of free *gens de couleur*, a socially constructed designation Europeans coined to classify a broad spectrum of mixed-race or nonwhite people.

Although countless books and articles on Puerto Rico reference Haiti, the Haitian Revolution and Haitians, the historian Arturo Morales Carrion is credited with penning a seminal essay on the repercussions of the Dominican-Haitian crisis during the period 1791-1805. The former government official, statesman and head of the University of Puerto Rico observed that “The crisis that spawned the revolutionary situation from 1791 onward [had] profound effects on Puerto Rican history” (1976: p. 19). In pre-revolutionary times, he suggested, Santo Domingo, Haiti and Puerto Rico enjoyed a relative period of more or less amicable relations that were conditioned by the development of mutually beneficial clan-

destine mercantile links between the inhabitants of all three territories.

However, the tone of these intercolonial contacts took on a different, hostile character after 1791. From that date onward, Spain implemented a string of defensive and offensive measures to prevent the insurrectionary “contagion” in Haiti from spreading to Santo Domingo and Puerto Rico. This included deploying troops to strengthen vulnerable positions in Santo Domingo, offering honorific titles and other incentives to Haitian military leaders willing to put down their arms and/or to join the Spanish side, and banning the introduction into Spanish American soil of subversive literature or people who sympathized with Franco-Haitian libertarian ideas. The “*miedo al negro*” (“fear of Blacks”) began to grip Spanish colonial authorities, who were convinced that the growing “Haitianization” of the Caribbean could spark a race war in Cuba and Puerto Rico. Although nothing close to it took place in Puerto Rico, negrophobia clouded their racial sensibilities through at least 1850.

After failing to turn the tide of the revolution to its benefit, in 1796 Spain reluctantly ceded its territory in Hispaniola to France. Since the revolution had crippled the agricultural estates of the French colony, Spain sought to fill the resulting vacuum in the world market of tropical commodities by offering asylum to economically viable but politically safe Saint Domingans willing to relocate to Puerto Rico and Cuba to support ongoing plans to promote commercial agriculture in both colonies. At first, the Spanish Crown welcomed only French planters and overseers, but it soon realized that it also needed field hands and technical personnel to successfully build, maintain and operate the growing number of sugar and coffee *haciendas* that were springing up across Cuba and Puerto Rico. Despite Spain’s efforts to keep out “free colored” West Indians (defined here as persons born or raised in the non-Hispanic Caribbean), some of the farmers and plantation managers, as well as the majority of the workers who relocated to Puerto Rico from the French Caribbean were nonwhites! Planters and builders in Puerto Rico eagerly hired them for their expertise in a wide variety of highly specialized jobs needed on the sugar and coffee estates and the urban areas. By contrast, government officials kept the workers tightly under surveillance and routinely harassed, detained, arrested, incarcerated or deported those whom they suspected of taking part in anti-white or anti-Spanish activities.

Not surprisingly, between 1800 and 1850 Franco-phone migrants made up the majority of foreigners living in Puerto Rico, and they claimed just over 60% of the capital

Continued on next page

introduced to the island during the same interval. They generally took up residence in the commercial or plantation enclaves of San Juan, Ponce, Mayagüez and Guayama. Saint Domingans made up half of all West Indians living and working in Mayagüez and the villa of San Germán, both located on the western and southwestern coast of Puerto Rico, respectively. Matías Brugman, who used various aliases, including “El Americano,” “Mississippi” and “Capá” (from Capá Prieto, the name of a secret revolutionary cell that he led) lived in Mayagüez, where he once owned a coffee plantation worked by 17 enslaved workers. Although the verdict on his ethnic/racial roots and provenance is still not in, he was reputedly born in Louisiana to Dutch-Haitian parents. His name is enshrined in the annals of Puerto Rican history as one of the principal leaders of the 1868 Grito de Lares, the island’s first organized attempt to strike out for independence from Spain. On a non-political note, Puerto Ricans are daily exposed to songs performed by El Gran Combo (“los mulatos del sabor”), a musical group established by the great Rafael Ithier, whose surname likely came to Puerto Rico from a distant relative who emigrated from France or the French Caribbean. ■

**Works consulted**

Arturo Morales Carrión, Arturo. “El reflujo en Puerto Rico de la crisis dominico-haitiana, 1791-1805.” *Revista Eme Eme: Estudios Dominicanos* 27 (1976): 19-39.

Jorge L. China. “The Haitian Revolution and its Impact in the Caribbean.” *Puerto Rico Online Encyclopedia*. San Juan: Puerto Rico Endowment for the Humanities, 2011. Available online at: <https://enciclopediapr.org/en/encyclopedia/impact-of-the-haitian-revolution-in-the-caribbean/> ■

**ELECTION RESULTS**

**ZANMI DETROIT WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBERS**

The 2019 HNGD elections took place during the General Meeting on October 6th. As per the HNGD By-Laws, only due paying members were able to vote. The process was overseen by Dr. Soledad Nelson. The results are as follows:

- Margareth Corkery, President (2nd Term)
- Alain Desvallons Mentor, Vice-President (1st Term)
- Janny Magloire Milton, Secretary (1st Term)
- Shirley Alce Konate, Treasurer (1st Term)

The new Board will take office in January 2020. ■

**COMMUNITY NEWS & EVENTS**

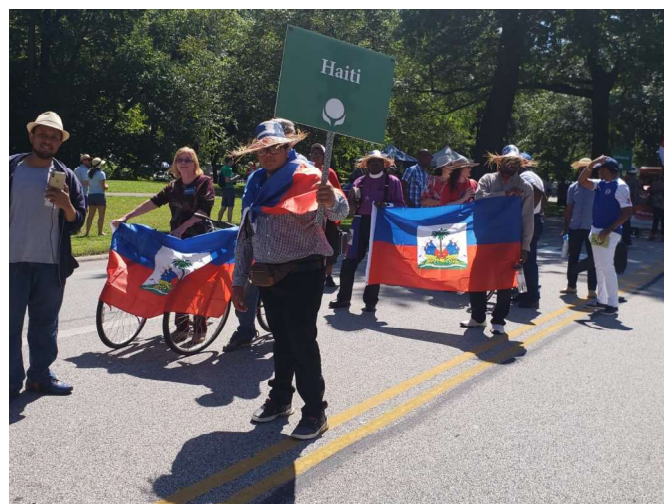


**HAITIANS JOIN AND CELEBRATE THEIR HERITAGE IN PARADE OF FLAGS IN NORTHEAST OHIO**

*By Gerard Salomon and Nicolas Paul*

The 2019 Parade of Flags at the 74th annual One World Day in the Cleveland Cultural Gardens is sure to make history. It was magnificent. Cleveland will make International News. This year, the organizer introduced one area dedicated to education and fun for children and adults. Haitians have watched the great parade for some time. There were twenty-one of us that triumphantly marched and were recognized. It looks like they were waiting for us among the many hundreds of other nations united to honor everyone’s homeland. With Gerard Salomon “a la guitare” we sang the rhythmic Haitian songs of our beloved homeland, with our Haitian flags, our pride and joy, at the center. We can’t wait for 2020 to come so that we may celebrate again and highlight our love for our Haitian heritage in the Cleveland Cultural Garden in Northeast Ohio.

Some of the Activities include: Lolly the Trolley around the Gardens. Participants can tour the Cultural Gardens for free throughout One World Day; Children’s Village, Cultural Programs and Education; Cultural Performances at the Gardens; and Ethnic Cuisine and Exhibitors at each Garden. This year the Cleveland US Naturalization Ceremony for 24 new US Citizens was held after the Parade of Flags One World Day. ■



Continued on next page



## RELIEF EFFORT

On Sunday September 22<sup>nd</sup>, Metro Detroit rose to the occasion in aid of the Bahamians and Haitians who were severely affected by Hurricane Dorian.

It was a collaborative effort lead by CCCO, WIAA, JAM, HNDG, WWIA, Caribbean Chill & Grill, CSLC and Jam Rock foods. The day was filled with an outpouring of donations from many folks who showed love, special live performances by Universal Xpression, Roots Vibrations and the polished Dance Group.

The Bahamians led by Mr. Kevin Forbes decorated the hall and brought special Bahamian dishes. In addition, Caribbean Chill & Grill contributed Curry Chicken, Jerk Chicken, Conch soup and Barbeque, which sold out.

DJ music was provided by VDJ Super J filling the venue with great music. The most touching part of the day was to see willing hands sorting, lifting and packing without being asked. The goods were then taken to the holding spot by Travis Mackey and Kevin Forbes.

It was a wonderful and successful affair with unity on display as the community and the different organizations rose to the occasion and did their part to help the Hurricane victims in the Bahamas.

We were able to stage, sort, pack and transport in an assembly line motion the same day. Thanks to all who donated, the money, goods, services and time that enabled us to raise almost \$20,000.00 in cash and goods for the victims! More items are still being dropped off and we are now in the shipping phase.

We will have a wrap up and summary after the goods are distributed to the folks in the Bahamas. ■



## THE MELANIN COLLECTIVE GIRLS PROGRAM: A PATH TO SELF DISCOVERY AND GROWTH

Melanin Collective Girls' Program is a project that falls under the "Educational Development" work group of the Caribbean Community Service Center (CCSC). This program is created to focus on educating brown skinned girls ages 10-14 years old about the Caribbean Region. The project was designed for 10 young ladies and we committed that if only one girl signed up, we would still run the program. We were elated that we ended up with two magnificent young ladies who got along very well.

**The 2019 Program focused on Ancestral Celebration:** Participants explored brown-skinned girls from around the world, highlighting the beauty and strength of brown. This idea took a liberal arts approach. Participants were encouraged to recreate what they have learned through cooking, music, dance, spoken word, skits and clothing. The 6 weeks program was scheduled on Saturdays from 10 AM to 2 PM. The community enjoyed a showcase at CCSC's Forget Columbus Day (FCD) fundraiser last October.

We are grateful to the West Indian American Association for allowing us to use the hall each Saturday from 10-2pm from July 13<sup>th</sup> to August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

Each week was filled with activities, with various topics to discuss and art & craft.

The participants, Sasha Ferguson and Naja Swyer, learnt about their ancestors and Caribbean Heritage. During the discussion, the ladies were able to talk about their background and who they are as individuals. The program not only focused on knowing our neighbors but also on building our confidence as melanin women in this society. The ladies were able to end the conversation with an understanding of who they are and what they stand for.

The ladies not only had discussions, but they also learned how to make a headpiece by Ralph Taylor (Caribbean Madi Gras Production) that they used in their graduation cultural presentation. Sasha and Naja also attended a Girlhood Empowerment Conference hosted by Ber-Henda Williams that provided them with an overview of educational opportunities. Throughout the program the ladies learned a lot and enjoyed every aspect of the program.

The graduation was Saturday 8/17/2019 and we were happy to have State Senator Erika Geiss as the Keynote Speaker. Her speech was inspirational and encouraging to the girls, letting them know that they are on the right path to leading a life of fulfilment and success.

Reflection by Sasha Ferguson with input from Naja Swyer:

"This a reflection on the whole program and what Naja and I both thought of it. We thought that the program was very inspiring to young black women like ourselves and very fun. We thought it was a nice place to represent who we are as persons and a place where you can really be, you. We

Continued on next page





would both definitely do it again and we recommend it 100% to anybody in need of some inspiration and who needs a place where we as a community can come together as one”

Melanin Collective Girls program will continue to run with the graduated young lady as a mentor.

We want to thank Mrs. Maeve Cook, Mrs. Sonya Harris, Ms. Janlynn Miller, Mr. Ralph Taylor, The Haitian Network Group of Detroit, Mrs. Erika Geiss; Sponsors L&M LLC and Gigglez Comedy for believing in the project and we look forward to 2020 Girls Program. ■



Naja Swyer & Sasha Ferguson

Program Manager: Ms. Petagaye Fagan

Program Sponsor: Mr. Robert Shimkoski

Executive Director: Ms. Sophia Chue

Email: [watchusmi@gmail.com](mailto:watchusmi@gmail.com)

Website: [www.caribbeancommunitysc.org](http://www.caribbeancommunitysc.org)

FaceBook: <https://www.facebook.com/CaribbeanCommunityServiceCenter/?ref=bookmarks>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/caribbeancommunitysc/> ■

opment. The organization was founded by Stephanie Rousseau, a Detroit native, in March 2018. Stephanie Rousseau is Certified Public Accountant (CPA) and financial consultant at Accenture. During her weekends she spends countless hours, serving the female youth in Detroit, while during the week she is traveling to Fortune 500 companies across the country providing financial consulting.

Prim & Prosper, Inc. strives to inspire a lifestyle of purpose, build a generation of women that understand their worth and value and who are unwilling to compromise who God created them to be for the appeasement of others. The organization has 3 pillars – Elegance, Confidence, and Ambition. Elegance focuses on sisterhood, mentorship, inspiring creativity and exposure through travel, art and philanthropy. Confidence focuses on educating our girls on nutrition, mental health and the importance of exercise to maintain a sound mind and body. Ambition focuses on continuously challenging yourself to improve your purpose, exposing yourself to educational opportunities and thriving regardless of obstacles.

Prim & Prosper, Inc. does not limit their impact to Detroit, but they travel across the world, working with various organizations that are improving lives within their community. Prim & Prosper, Inc. not only gets the opportunity to learn and be exposed to new cultures, but they are able to spread love across many communities. They not only encourage giving, they live it. Prim & Prosper has traveled to Thailand, Haiti, Cost Rica, Bali, and Italy giving back and learning about their communities. Their next outreach trip will be in Ghana in December 2019.

Prim & Prosper, Inc. is still accepting high school girls for their upcoming program year from October 2019 – May 2020. To donate to Prim & Prosper, Inc.’s mission or to enroll your daughter in their program, please visit [www.primandprosper.org](http://www.primandprosper.org) or contact us at [primandprosper.purpose@gmail.com](mailto:primandprosper.purpose@gmail.com).

*Stephanie Rousseau, Founder & CEO* ■



## About Us



**PRIM & PROSPER, INC.** is a Detroit-based 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to encouraging young women to walk boldly in their God-given purpose with a focus on community awareness, empowerment, health & wellness and professional devel-

Continued on next page



## AN UPDATE AND A THANK YOU FROM THE GLOBAL HEALTH INITIATIVE (GHI)

Ms. Dana Parke (HNGD Member) & Ms. Doreen Dankerlui work at the Global Health Initiative (GHI) at Henry Ford Health System (HFHS) in Detroit. GHI's work in Haiti focuses on building health capacity through medical education and training initiatives.

The heart of our work in Haiti focuses on building the capacity of our partners in order to improve health. At GHI, we ask our collaborators what their goals are, and rely on their expertise and understanding of the local context in order to design solutions to those goals. Overwhelmingly, our partners – including the Ministry of Health, Université Quisqueya School of Medicine, Hopital Universitaire de Mirebalais, and others – have asked for help strengthening the capacity of Haiti's health workforce through education, training, and research.

Thus, GHI has spent the last 5 years refining its signature project: a medical education exchange program. With our partners, we select trainees who are dedicated to remain in Haiti and have strong potential of becoming health leaders. We bring them to Detroit for a 1-2 month tailored clinical and research observation at Henry Ford Hospital to enhance their skills.

To date, GHI has hosted a grand total of 17 Haitian physicians, medical students, and residents for training in Detroit!

This training truly has an impact, as evidenced by some of the recent accomplishments of our past trainees:

- When Dr. Fabienne Anglade spent her summer with us in 2015, she was one of only a dozen pathologists in the entire country of Haiti. She spent two months in Henry Ford's pathology and microbiology laboratory and returned to Haiti gaining a prestigious position at the Partners in Health Mirebalais Hospital. On top of that, she opened her own laboratory and has hired several lab technicians, further contributing to the economy and health capacity. She's even interested in researching cervical cancer, the most common cancer in Haitian women.
- 2016 trainee, Dr. Colette Alcide, is putting the lessons she learned from her time in Infectious Disease at Henry Ford Hospital into both her practice at *Hôpital Foyer*

*St. Camille*, and into her teaching at *Université Quisqueya*, passing her knowledge onto the next generation of Haiti's physicians. She has also taken on the role as Medical Director at Mitch Albom's Have Faith Haiti Mission orphanage in Port-au-Prince.

- In Haiti, every doctor must complete a full year of social service in a rural or underserved area, to give back to their country. One 2016 trainee, Goldony Beaubrun, is finishing his social service year in December. He is already looking to the future and plans to start a nonprofit to improve maternal and child health in his country, through initiatives such as mobile clinics at schools and public health education and outreach.

When thinking about what's next for GHI in Haiti – certainly, we are strongly invested in continuing and growing these successful training opportunities: this summer we brought 3 Haitian physicians from Université Quisqueya Faculté des Sciences de la Santé, Hôpital Universitaire de Mirebalais, and our new partner, Hôpital de l'Université d'État d'Haïti. We are also helping Dr. Mentor Lucien at the Laboratoire National de Santé Publique to conduct a nation-wide scientific conference in Haiti on antimicrobial resistance this Fall. Hosting conferences in-country allows us to reach even more health professionals in Haiti, and we look forward to planning additional conferences and workshops this year.

We are so grateful to the HNGD community for their continued support of our efforts, from attending our annual Health for Haiti Fundraiser to welcoming our visiting trainees into their homes for some pikliz and griot! We look forward to increased collaboration with the community in the future. We expect to host 4-6 Haitian health professionals next summer and will depend on your support to enhance the experience for our trainees. Mesi anpil!

To learn more about GHI's efforts in Haiti or to offer support for our 2020 summer exchange, please contact [ghi@hfhs.org](mailto:ghi@hfhs.org).



**Our trainees: Joseph Cadet, Bettina Clement, and Erick Senot.**

*Our 2019 trainees at the Bel Bagay Lakay Haitian Art and Craft Festival with performer J. Perry*



*Impression from our annual Health for Haiti event, featuring our trainees, GHI hosts, and Mitch Albom.*





## MY PATH TO MEDICAL SCHOOL

*By Gadini O. Delisca, MD*



Dr. G Delisca

When I was in grade school, my parents often gave my brothers and I Haitian proverbs to translate and interpret. It was not until I was older, however, that I was able to fully appreciate the messages. One saying, in particular, resonates in my mind more than the others - *sonje lapli ki leve mayi ou* (remember the rain that made your corn grow). The saying is a reminder to always remember the people, sacrifices, and events that have impacted one's life. I credit my early experiences for not only shap-

ing me into the person I am today, but also for fueling my desire to pursue a career in medicine.

My father and I emigrated from Haiti when I was eighteen months old. We left during a turbulent time in Haiti's history marked with violence, political unrest, and coups. Shortly thereafter, my older brother and mother joined us in South Florida. While my parents attempted to get our refugee asylum case approved, they worked hard to provide for a growing family. To help my family earn extra income, I spent many summers and weekends assisting my father at his auto repair shop. When that did not make ends meet, my brothers and I would wake up early to help my father arrange and deliver the morning paper. It was these and other earlier experiences that taught me the value of hard work, diligence, and sacrifice. Furthermore, my upbringing instilled in me the willingness to be challenged and the resolve to persevere.

My interest in medicine was first sparked when I was in the tenth grade through my high school's medical magnet program. At first, I was apprehensive about complicating my curriculum with additional medically based courses, but the realization that it was time for me to start considering career choices provided reassurance in my decision. It proved to be a good choice. In the program, I learned about various aspects of medicine through courses ranging from Medical Skills and Services to Sports Medicine. The knowledge gained through the courses was often supple-

mented with hands on experience. Some of the practical experiences included coordinating school blood drives, assisting the school athletic trainer, and observing medical professionals. Although I found the medical material learned in the magnet program in itself rewarding, the aspect I most enjoyed was the personal interactions with patients. Whether it was comforting a student before he donated blood or wrapping an athlete's sprained ankle after a football game, I felt accomplished for being able to make a positive impact at such a personal level. The fact that medicine offers both an intellectual challenge and the opportunity to help others motivated me to take the premedical route in college.

While at Howard University, I challenged myself with a double major in Chemistry and Mathematics. To supplement the knowledge gained in my science courses, I took full advantage of research opportunities. From cloning bacteriophage T4 lysozyme proteins to collecting air samples on top of a 100-foot tower, I have enjoyed coupling theory with scientific experimentation. As an aspiring physician, I look forward to using science as a basis for diagnosis and discovery. My desire to become a physician is not only rooted in my interest in the sciences, but also in my desire to pursue a life of service. Throughout my collegiate career I balanced my academics with a personal life filled with service and volunteering. As a math tutor, I spent many hours volunteering at the Howard University mathematics lab. In addition to be a math tutor, I worked at a non-profit organization preparing math activities and assignments for elementary and middle school students. Not only did these experiences give me the chance to share my understanding of math, but it also allowed me to help and connect with others.

There are three important aspects that I want in a career: a challenge, a commitment to the well-being of others, and the opportunity for scientific inquiry. Medicine offers all of the above. As a result of my experiences I feel prepared to take on the demands of medical school. Furthermore, as a person who was born in a country filled with persons of humble means, I know the importance of fighting for those who do not have much. That is why upon the completion of my medical training I plan to use my skills to make an impact in underserved communities. I am up to the challenge of curing the world, one patient at a time. ■

## THE LITERARY CORNER



*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.*

### THE GIFT OF AGE

*By Regine Beauboeuf*

To God:

Gratitude. All I can say is gratitude.

Tonight, my heart is singing, not the loud, joyous, and cacophonous sound of praise hymns. Not at all, rather a humming low sound that resembles the airy, content, peaceful sound of a relaxation symphony with a backdrop of crystalline water sounds. My heart is harmonious. Not peaceful, harmonious. There is a difference. I have felt peace before, but a peace that coexists with the remnants of brokenness, resignation and a feeling of content for having survived. A place where I have surrendered my power.

But now, after having spent two weeks at home working from my sanctuary and doing what my calling as a mother, a friend, a lover, and a worker take me to do, my heart is feeling strong again. And harmony inhabits it. My heart had felt broken for so long and I was so cautious with it ever since. It is beating again its strong sound, its humming sound, its harmonious sound, knowing that it is creating and spreading love as it beats and no longer sharing quarters with brokenness and pain. Not erratic, unchecked sound, but a harmonious sound that knows that if it does not create love, mercy and compassion, it will go awry again and nothing good comes out of it.

So gratitude. Who would have thought? Who would have thought that I could even love after all of this? That I would feel strong enough to know deep down that I am lovable and that one is capable of losing himself into me? It is why my heart is humming? I do not think so. This is not related to something external to me, as pleasant as it may be. It comes from deep within and I am starting to understand that this humming is a result of strength, courage and flexibility, and unshakable faith in the power of the Universe and the power of one's soul when aligned with the power of the Universe. A power that makes me understand how our differences can create joy with acceptance and how useless it is to try to change others and hold onto them. For nothing lasts forever. Everything is temporal and holding onto it only brings more pain.

And this understanding, my friend, is the gift that aging gives us. And for this gift, I am grateful.

Love to all, especially those who have taught me through the hard lessons of life. ■

## THE 2019 BÈL BAGAY LAKAY FESTIVAL SPONSORS



Corkery Appraisal Services LLC



Soledad Couture®



THANK YOU!!!