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Zanmi Detroit

EDITOR'S NOTE

"Feelings, like rivers, are always in flux."
– Inspired by the work of Heraclitus



Hello again,
We are back with another edition of Zanmi Detroit. This time we are writing with a heavy soul that is holding tightly onto hope. We know that there have been pandemics and epidemics before: the Plague in the Middle Ages, the Spanish flu of 1918, and the more recent Ebola epidemic to name a few, and that the world has always moved on, with these events becoming a speck in time. The human brain is made that way; it remembers events both good and bad in a selective manner, although we always seem to be just where we left off at the last biological disaster. We hope that you and your loved ones are well and staying healthy, taking the necessary precautions to guard against infection.

In this issue, you will find more pictures than usual. HNGD has had a flux of new members and we wanted to make sure you get to know them. The celebration of Independence Day, with its "soup joumou," was such a smashing success that we wanted to share and relive the excitement of the event with you. From the psychologist corner, there is an article about stress and COVID-19. As you turn the pages, you will read about Hollywood actress Sasha Compere and the reasons for her success, meet our recent graduate from the US Military Academy at West Point, and a couple of police officers from our community. In addition, there is the inspirational story of Jonathan, the caddie who won an Evans Scholar, and an uplifting piece by Regine that celebrates the reaffirmation of the spirit after a troubled transition.

Wishing that we will find the fortitude to walk through this difficult journey, I look forward to our chat in the next issue of *Zanmi Detroit*. Take care and happy reading!

Jean-Claude Dutès, Ph.D.
Editor ■

FROM THE BOARD

Dear Friends,

The Coronavirus has taken all of us by surprise, forcing us into self-isolation and wondering when and how it will all end. We have lost many things that a month ago, we took for granted: loved ones, jobs, freedom to come and go as we please, a sense of control, and so much more!

Do not despair as this difficult moment will pass. Until then, try your best to make the most of this forced confinement; read the book that you never got to finish, play with your children more, call, text or chat with long-lost friends, remind those who are close to you how much you love them, wear a mask or cover your nose and mouth and go for walks in non-crowded areas, catch-up on movies, laugh, and joke. Bottom line: keep busy, keep living, and stop focusing on the bad news that you are being bombarded with!

What is equally important is how we respond to this crisis – not as individuals, but as caring members of an amazing community. We implore you to remain calm, and think of those in need while protecting yourself and those around you. Check in on your friends, neighbors, those who are at risk, the elderly and the weak. Remember to keep in your prayers those who pass away alone, and their family members who are not able to grieve in a way that will bring them closure. Take time to thank the frontline workers who are seeing firsthand the magnitude of the devastation caused by COVID-19.

Remind yourself that where there is hope, there is life. We are all in this together and we will come out stronger! Stay safe, stay connected, stay strong!

The Board of Haitian Network Group

Maggy Corkery- President
Alain Desvallons Mentor- Vice President
Janny Magloire Milton- Secretary
Shirley Alce Konate- Treasurer ■



FROM THE PSYCHOLOGIST: COVID STRESS

"Happiness is like those palaces in fairy tales whose gates are guarded by dragons: We must fight in order to conquer it."
— Alexandre Dumas

COVID-19: MANAGING A STRESSFUL EVENT

Dr. Jean-Claude Dutès

COVID-19, a virus that is highly transmissible, has upended our world. It threatens our life, our livelihood, and the quality of our existence. Its effects are both pervasive and nefarious. They include hospitalization and death, with infections ranging from mild to severe. Even when we feel well sheltered from its primary threat to our health, many of us are fearful, nervous, and worried about the health and life circumstances of those close to us. In addition, most of us feel compelled to change the way we used to think, feel, and act.

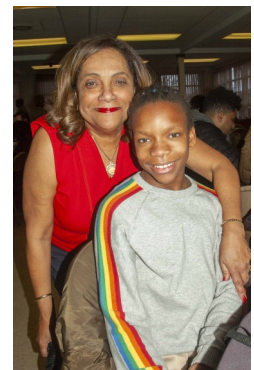
For many of us, dealing with unexpected and unwanted changes of this magnitude can lead to confusion, with feelings of dread, frustration, and inner tension contributing to a deep sense of insecurity that results in a state of hypervigilance. In other words, most of us perceive COVID-19 as a threat and, therefore, we are, or at least may be, at risk for experiencing a heightened level of stress, that is a level of psychological, mental and physical discomfort higher than what we are used to. When this happens, we tend to become aware of an uncomfortable change in our mental functions, physical well-being, emotional state, and actions.

Early in our reaction to a stressful event, the heightened stress level is salutary; it helps us focus on the danger at hand and harness our internal resources to address the problem effectively. As long as we are able to retain a sense of control, feeling confident of our ability to effectively manage the perceived danger, we are unlikely to suffer any untoward effects in the long run. On the other hand, when we are lost, feel helpless, worried and fearful, and unsure of what to do, the heightened stress level can increase and/or remain undiminished, putting us at risk for having a host of symptoms. To decrease the risk of this happening and reinforce our ability to strengthen ourselves in the fight against the perceived danger associated with the virus, we suggest taking the steps outlined below, which are based on neuroscience research and my work with patients dealing with all types of stress over the last 35 years.

COPING WITH COVID-19

In dealing with a stressful event, it is **Continued on page 9**

PICTURES OF HNGD "SOUP JOUMOU" GATHERING



More pictures on last page

PROUD OF THEIR ROOTS: OUR ADULT CHILDREN AT WORK



SASHA COMPÈRE: ANOTHER STAR FROM DETROIT'S HAITIAN COMMUNITY

On March 27, 2020, Sasha appeared on the recently released Netflix film "Uncorked," starring Courtney B. Vance, Niecy Nash, and Mamoudou Athie (Sasha plays his girlfriend).

Below, Sasha shares a few words with Zanmi Detroit about the reasons for her success in Hollywood.

Zanmi Detroit: What is the reason behind your success? Obviously, talent is number one, but what else do you think kept you going, even when you encountered roadblock after roadblock?

Sasha: I think passion was a big part of keeping me going, and also accepting that, like all hard things, success takes a lot of hard work.

A lot of people come to L.A. and get discouraged by the roadblocks, or rejection, but all of that only fueled me to improve my craft and love what I see in myself. When you allow the rejection of others to bring you down, you can't truly reach your full potential. So, it was mostly that and having fun!

I'd be acting whether I succeeded or not, so I think loving it for the feeling it brings me more than loving it for success allows me to have fun. When you love what you do, I think people can see that and want to be a part of that feeling, and then you hold all the power.

WHAT'S NEXT?

You can see Sasha in the upcoming TV show, "Love Life," opposite Anna Kendrick. It will be on HBO Max on May 27th! The trailer for this new comedy series can be viewed here:

⇒ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZp_g271jpo ■

CONGRATULATIONS JONATHAN!

Judy Casalou and her husband, Dr. Greg Rowsell, along with **Jonathan Paul**, age 19, joined HNGD last year. In 2016, Judy and her husband sponsored Jonathan, who is from Haiti, so that he could study in the United States. The three of them have attended some of our events and reported that they "found HNGD members to be a very supportive and dynamic group, celebrating their Haitian roots. We en-

joy getting the news of events and it has been so helpful for Jonathan to connect with fellow Haitians." For this reason, Judy wanted to share with us some amazing news.

Jonathan has been awarded an Evans Scholarship, a coveted scholarship for golf caddies. A limited number of Evans Scholarships are awarded nationally, covering four years of tuition and housing.

In the state of Michigan, only Michigan State University in East Lansing and University of Michigan in Ann Arbor have Evans Scholars, and both have their own Evans Scholar house near campus. Jonathan plans on studying Mechanical Engineering at MSU starting in September 2020.

To qualify for an Evans Scholarship, candidates must be formidable golf caddies, exceptional students, involved in their community, and have financial need. Jonathan has spent the last two summers as a caddie at the Country Club of Detroit. It has been hard work, and often, he opted to carry a bag at 8 am instead of sleeping in. He has been diligent in school at University of Detroit Jesuit High School, and very involved in his community. He is a fine young man, deserving of this prestigious award.

Thank you for allowing me to tell you about Jonathan Paul's accomplishment in becoming an Evans Scholar. He is an excellent representative of Haiti and a wonderful young man. ■



Picture credit: Wright Wilson/ Detroit Catholic

We are fortunate to have a number of young men who have chosen to dedicate their lives to protect and serve our community, our cities, and this country. We knew them when they were in diapers, and under our very eyes they have morphed into responsible and mature adults.

Chris, Mathieu and Michael, in spite of the fact that you are no longer children, you will always be "our kids." We praise your parents, Mr. and Mrs. Pierre Moreau, Mr. and Mrs. Michel Charles and Dr. Dominique Mondé Matthews, for having the courage to support your decision to serve. We respect you for daring to accomplish something that so many of us are not brave enough to do. We thank you for risking your lives everyday so that we and our loved ones can remain free from danger. Please be safe and know that your community is behind you 100%, and thinks very highly of you for your dedication. ■

Continued on next page



OFFICER MATHIEU CHARLES

For the past six years, Mathieu Charles has been working in Detroit's Third Precinct, which is responsible for the safety of citizens in the Downtown area, New Center, North End, and the Cultural Center up to the border of Highland Park. Mathieu is a Field Training Officer and a Patrolman. Students on the Wayne State University campus are able to walk freely around the campus thanks to a joint Crime Task Force Operation between the Third Precinct and Wayne State



Mathieu on patrol with his partner, Gilbert Muñoz III, originally from Puerto Rico

University Police. Nowadays, it is not uncommon to see Mathieu patrolling the area in full gear complete with N95 Respirator Mask and gloves. His little ones, Sydney and Luc, could not ask for a better role model!

Officer Charles, we salute you! ■

DETECTIVE CHRISTOPHER MOREAU

As a police detective, I investigate all types of crimes and build cases against criminals. I have been part of investigations that involved malicious destruction of property, criminal sexual conduct, and murder. My current specialty is criminal sexual conduct or CSD.

My job varies from day to day. On average, I follow up on cases I have been assigned by speaking with victims, interrogating suspects, writing reports, getting warrants signed by a judge or magistrate, or testifying at the 41A courthouse. If in the process, a major crime occurs, I will report to the scene and investigate, making sure that the crime scene is documented properly by evidence technicians and interviewing any victims or witnesses.

I have been interested in Law Enforcement since watching action movies with my family at a young age. I started my law enforcement career at the Detroit Police Department, working first at Downtown Central Events, then moving to the Second and Eighth Precincts. For nearly five years, I worked in the Special Operations unit at the Eighth Precinct before coming to Sterling Heights.

There have been many exciting moments in my career. I have been involved in many chases and arrested dangerous

criminals. Being a new detective in Sterling Heights, I think most of my investigation stories are still ahead of me. But one of the most memorable moments of my career was when I was named a "CORE" officer, a community outreach officer, for Sterling Heights. As exciting as some aspects of police work is, my favorite part is engaging with the public. I patrolled the "David" area of Sterling Heights, which has the highest minority population, and it means a lot to me to be a known figure in the community.



Congratulations to Christopher and Sarah Moreau. We wish you a world of happiness and joy! ■

SECOND LIEUTENANT MICHAEL MATHEWS

Born of a Haitian mother and African-American father, I was born and raised in Southfield, Michigan. Since I graduated from the Roeper School in 2015, my journey has been a hard but exciting experience. After graduating, I immediately left to attend Cadet Basic Training at the United States Military Academy at West Point. Through my four years at the Academy, I completed various capstone field training exercises, including Air Assault School, and obtained my bachelor's degree in Operations Research.

Graduating with the West Point Class of 2019, I became a commissioned Second Lieutenant in the US Army as a Field Artillery officer. From there, I moved to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, the home of Field Artillery, to complete my Basic Officer Leaders Course. Still on the move, I went to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, stopping at Fort Benning, Georgia to complete Airborne School. Fort Bragg, home of the 82nd Airborne Division, is now my permanent duty station for the foreseeable future.



In my military career, I hope to complete time as a Fire Support Officer, integrating artillery with ground combat forces, and as a Platoon Leader, coordinating and managing a group of cannoners and their weapon systems. Beyond the military, I want to pursue an MBA and see what else life has in store for me! ■



COMMUNITY NEWS & EVENTS



On September 1, 2019, the Bahamas experienced one of the most dreadful and devastating hurricanes. This unprecedented event has decimated almost everything in Marsh Harbour, Abaco. The Salem Seventh-day Adventist church that was in Marsh Harbour, Abaco suffered tremendous loss. But, praise be to God, no lives were lost.



Four years before Hurricane Dorian, the Salem church started this church building project. The members worked assiduously to erect this place of worship. It was the dream of every member of the church to worship in the new building by December 31, 2019.

Unfortunately, Hurricane Dorian came and altered that dream. This picture shows what is left from the beautiful church that was being built. This Dorian experience left almost the entire Salem church family homeless but, praise God, not hopeless.



Despite what has transpired, God continues to be faithful to His children. Since then, He has been using people from far and near to help the church family in this time of crisis. Against this backdrop, I want to take this opportunity on

behalf of the Salem church family to express special thanks to the Haitian Network Group of Detroit for the donation of \$300 that it sent to us.

May God's continued blessing be upon you as you seek to make a difference in the lives of those who need a helping hand. We solicit your continued prayers as we continue to keep our eyes on the God of our Salvation.

Wilson Isnord, Former Pastor

Salem SDA Church

For additional information, check out the following video and interviews with Pastor Wilson Isnord via the links below:

<https://news.adventist.org/en/all-news/news/go/2019-09-19/inter-american-leaders-see-hurricane-dorian-destruction-firsthand/>

<http://www.tribune242.com/news/2019/sep/07/how-mudd-and-pigeon-peas-were-lost/> ■

HNGD WELCOMES 2020: COMMEMORATION OF HAÏTÌ'S 216th ANNIVERSARY



On January 26, 2020, the 5th annual HNGD Haitian Independence Day celebration was held in the Community Room of St. David Episcopal Church in Southfield. The place was filled with over 90 new and old friends. It was the middle of winter, but that didn't stop some attendants who drove hundreds of miles for the auspicious occasion: Canis Arbrouet, Eric Guilliod, and the Boyer family. They all came with one thing in mind, devouring the delicious Soup Joumou and Pâtés that had been prepared by our faithful volunteers Adeline Auguste, Marie José Alcé, Jocelyne Charles, Jinette Chapman, Rose Moïse and Edith Morisseau.

Once we sang La Dessalinienne, the Haitian National Anthem, our guests made themselves comfortable to savor the traditional fare. It was as close as you could get to the "real thing" without going to Haiti, and they couldn't get enough of it!

Everyone got a chance to hear the story of the guest of honor, Mr. Gardy Boncœur, who was evacuated to Michigan after the 2010 earthquake. Thanks to Pierre Richard La-

Continued on next page



marre, the owner of Health Transportation, Mr. Emmanuel Ngwe, donated his services for the trip from Flint, where Gardy currently resides. Mr. Ngwe received a special recognition for his continued support of our compatriot's transportation needs since 2010. The event ended on a positive note with a review of the organization's accomplishment over the past year. Everyone had a good time in an atmosphere of amiable camaraderie and togetherness! Moments like these help us appreciate the benefit of being part of such a close-knit community! ■



Gardy Boncœur (Center), Emmanuel Ngwe, Pierre Richard Lamarre and the HNGD Board

“L’UNION FAIT LA FORCE” 2020 HAITIAN HERITAGE MONTH

HNGD recently received an invitation from Mr. Charlot Lucien to join a coalition formed by 14 different Haitian organizations, with the purpose of disseminating a public service announcement about COVID-19 that targets Haitians and Haitian Americans. As you may remember, Mr. Lucien is the renowned storyteller based in Boston who wowed children and adults alike during his performance at the 2019 Bèl Bagay Lakay Festival.

This innovative initiative to address the pandemic came to life under the leadership of Haitian Americans United Inc. (HAU) in Massachusetts. All the organizations involved in this effort simultaneously launched the campaign on Sunday, May 3, between 10am and noon on their respective social media outlets. Hats off to HAU for not only being the catalyst for this show of togetherness, but also for helping us prove that “L’union Fait la force” is not a utopia. When we put our minds to it, “Unity Makes Strength”!

On Sunday May 17th, the day before the actual “jou Fèt Drapo Ayisyen” (Haitian Flag Day), members of the coalition will reconvene for a live Zoom meeting from 3pm to 4:15pm. Representatives from each group will deliver a brief motivational message about a priority topic for Haitians in the diaspora touching on heritage, COVID-19, the 2020 Census, youth, civic engagement, duty to vote, etc.). The gathering will be broadcasted live by the Boston Public Access TV program BNN-TV23 (<https://bnnmedia.org/>) and on Facebook. During the remainder of

the Haitian Heritage Month, the coalition will present a series of prevention and care messages using historical female figures and a well-known contemporary leader in the Haitian diaspora.

The initial message that was disseminated by the Coordinating Committee included a flier in English, French and Creole, accompanied with the following introduction.

The month of May has been traditionally celebrated in the Haitian diaspora since 1998 as Haitian Heritage Month, with various themes emphasizing pride in Haitian history, culture and the need to empower the Diaspora community. With the dramatic situation caused by COVID-19 pandemic, several communities had to adjust their Heritage Month celebrations and their messages.

The following organizations, based in 11 different US states, Canada and France, collaborated with Haitian Americans United Inc, based in Boston, to jointly release these posters in three languages, promoting a Haitian Heritage month theme that reflects the need to respond to the pandemic: “Protecting Our Heritage by Protecting Ourselves”.

Canada : GRAHN Monde

France: Fédération des Haïtiens de l'Europe

Connecticut: Haitian American Professionals of Connecticut - (HAPAC)

Florida: Family Action Network Movement - (FANM)

Georgia: Haiti on Demand

Illinois: GRAHN-USA

Massachusetts: Haitian Americans United Inc - (HAU)

Michigan: Haitian Network Group of Detroit

New Hampshire: Haitian Community Center of New Hampshire

New Jersey: National Alliance for the Advancement of Haitian Professionals (NAAHP)

New York : Haitian Round Table (HRT)

Rhode Island: New Bridges for Haitian Success - NB4HS

Washington DC: Haitian Renewal Alliance - HRA

Multiple states: United Front of the Haitian Diaspora (UFHD)

Haitian national hero Jean-Jacques Dessalines was deemed the unifying voice who could command the moral authority to enjoin all to comply with crucial public health recommendations: wash hands frequently, stay at home until new guidance, wear masks, stay 6 feet apart from others. ■



Charlot Lucien and his daughter Malaika Arabelle during a Fèt Drapo celebration in Boston

Continued on next page

BLUE CROSS BLUE SHIELD OF MICHIGAN CELEBRATES HAITIAN HERITAGE MONTH

In honor of Haitian Heritage Month, HNGD was invited to make a presentation about Haitian culture for the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan employees. This effort was spearheaded by the Senior Director of Diversity and Inclusion, Ms. Bridget Hurd. In order to prepare for the big day, I worked closely with Carla Smith, a Manager in that department. For 6 straight months, Carla and I worked on all the details to ensure that the presentation would go without a hitch. We thought we had it all figured out from the most minute detail like the timing of the presentation to the things that we thought would make the experience unforgettable: bringing Haitian artwork, offering a live performance or even some tasty morsels to the participants. Once COVID-19 raised its ugly crowned head, our ambitious plans went up in smoke. Nevertheless, the show had to go on. Although we made some adjustments and scaled down, Carla's enthusiasm about the project never diminished. As we got closer to the date of the talk, she and I met more frequently to finalize the game plan: we would have a virtual presentation using the WebEx platform and there would be a team on hand to handle any technical issues. On May 6, After the welcome remarks by Bridget Hurd, the presentation started with a short poll to allow the 200+ BCBS employees who were in attendance to test their knowledge about Haiti. One hour is certainly not enough to talk about any country; let alone about Haiti and its unique culture! So, I offered an overview about our Ayiti Cheri with enough information to pique their interest and whet their appetite: the history, the customs, the symbols of national pride and the fact that Haitians and Haitian Americans are an integral part of the US multicultural tapestry. The numerous positive feedbacks that I received at the end confirmed that I had reached my goal of having the participants wanting to learn more about our Darling Haiti. For me, it was an exhilarating experience to be given the opportunity to talk about my homeland, a place so close to my heart. Kudos to Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and to Bridget Hurd for championing diversity and inclusion!

Submitted by Maggy Corkery ■



Bridget Hurd

DUSABLE HERITAGE ASSOCIATION 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION MARCH 7TH, 2020

By Nicolas Paul, DHA Event Co-Chair

Looking back a month later and seeing how much our lives have changed since our 20th Anniversary Celebration in Chicago on March 7th, 2020, we are so grateful to have hosted such a delightful gathering with our friends, loyal supporters and past presidents of the DuSable Heritage Association.

This year not only was a milestone celebration, but something special for those who have been there with us for the last two decades promoting the legacy of Jean-Baptiste Pointe DuSable (founder and first settler of Chicago in the late seventeen century).

We started with a series of lectures during the entire Black History Month throughout the City of Chicago, led by our Secretary Dr. Courtney P. Joseph. We appreciate her hard work and dedication. We thank our treasurer and event cochair Marie-Josée Saint Preux, who put the anniversary celebration together from the location, the decorations, to the great Haitian food selections; our Director Frantz Dossous for being on top of the entertainment for the evening; and our President Etzer Cantave for his presentation addressing DHA's history and achievements in the community for the past twenty years, updates on the construction project of the DuSable Park and our plans for our future generation.

After the dinner, it was dance time: I introduced Mr. Claude Marcelin, one of the legends on the Haitian music scene. A first-time Chicago visitor, he made a special trip from Montreal Canada to be a part of our Anniversary Celebration. I can honestly say our guests were pleased to dance to some old classic songs from DP Express, Difficiles, Gypsies de Petion-Ville and more.

It was a wonderful evening and we want to thank our sponsors, caterers, volunteers and our guests. Last but not least, very special thanks our HNGD friends Margareth Corkery and Shirley Alce-Konate who came from Michigan to be with us. We appreciate your support. ■



DHA Board: from left: Frantz Dossous, Marie-Josée Saint Preux, Etzer Cantave, Dr. Courtney P. Joseph and Nicolas Paul

MY EXPERIENCE AT THE HNGD HAITI NEW YEAR CELEBRATION IN JANUARY

by Jennifer Berkemeier

When I brought home my beautiful adopted daughter from Haiti nearly eight years ago, I wanted to make sure she was connected with her rich Haitian culture in personal ways. I reached out to the Haitian Network Group of Detroit and was immediately welcomed.

My daughter Helen-Widma is eleven years old now, and growing up to be a strong, curious and insightful young woman. I can help her with all things American, and hopefully show her the positive attributes of a single, full-time working mom. But I cannot show her what it means to be a proud Haitian, and for that, I thank my lovely Haitian friends.

My daughter and I had the privilege of being invited to, and attending, the Haitian New Year Soup Joumou celebration on January 26. There were nearly 100 people in attendance, most of them Haitian; I brought my sister and mom to meet and mingle. Haitian music played in the background, and the sounds of laughter mixed with French and Creole during hugs filled the room. We sat with some of my now good Haitian friends and reconnected. The meal was prepared by some of the best cooks – Haitian men and women who cook in the traditional style every day for their families and friends.

I have tried to expose my daughter to the lovely ways of the Haitian people. We look at websites during Carnival, I make my own Soup Joumou in January, we play Haitian music and we look at photos I've taken during my visits there. I know she is learning, and so I'll keep showing her. But when she truly puts her shoulders back and shows a natural pride in her heritage is after we've been immersed with our Haitian friends. She tries to speak Creole. She wants to know what people's names are. She wants to know what's in the food we ate. She wants to visit her native country. So I will continue to be ever thankful for this great group of people who have welcomed me and my daughter into their lives, and am grateful for their influence in developing another beautiful Haitian woman. ■



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. ■

April 9, 2020

Huntington Woods

9:52PM

It all started this past summer when I realized that this feeling of uneasiness and unhappiness was simply due to a lack of joy and purpose. Further self-reflection led me to conclude that I took for granted the sense of joy that I always carried within. I took for granted that, without intention and purpose, the joy I carried within would always remain available whenever desired. I had what regular folks call an epiphany and what Oprah would call an “ah-ha!” moment.

And now, what? What do you do when the light bulb goes off and you want to bring about change in your life? Well, you start with a plan. And so, I made a list of all the little and big things that excite me and bring me joy. Traveling was right there at the top, and I had not traveled for fun since my trip to Cuba in the summer of 2018. The idea of a trip to a foreign land was taking hold and, as the weeks passed, it went from a good idea to a firm concept, and ultimately a “must do” to jump start joy in my life.

It also made sense since a new decade was about to start, and I wanted this trip to be significant in meaning. What about setting sail far away on my own? A trip around the holidays soon after Christmas? A self-discovery trip that would find me in prayers and reflection in Lourdes on the first day of the new decade? That sounded really good, but do you go to Europe for just three days? What about spending the three days before the New Year in one of the most fun cities in Europe? London, here I come! And while there, why not plan for more fun during the New Year's celebration and go to the theater for a rendition of the Tina Turner musical? There, I would experience first-hand the triumphs of a woman who achieved her greatest success and fame as an artist in her forties and while at it, met a man 16 years younger who would turn her world upside down and make all her dreams come true? Talk about joy, uplift, and purpose? And talk about an amazing show and evening!

I went ahead and purchased my ticket to fly to London and spend one week in Europe, and for the sake of it, to return home via Paris since I was going to be in France anyway. A week later, however, I had another epiphany and decided to extend my stay another week to, as the saying goes, “do me.” I settled on the island of Mallorca on the Mediterranean Sea off the coast of Spain where I rented an apartment for a week stay. While there, I combed through the island, learned its history, sampled its food, visited its churches, and even dreamed for a quick moment of moving there. The feast day of the Kings found me in Mallorca where it is celebrated with parades, dancing, and drinking in the squares of the Old Town. Mallorca is magnificent!

Continued on next page



And of course, Paris. I can walk through Paris an entire day, week, month, year, take in the city, its sights, life, culture, and never tire of it. Through the entire trip, I made it a point to visit sacred places and participate in services and masses everywhere I went: London, Lourdes, Toulouse, Mallorca, and Paris.

I returned home reinvigorated. I had no idea that I would need it so much! I had no idea the surprises 2020 had in store for us.

Régine

To be followed...



If you would like to hear more about Régine's journey or learn from her experiences, check-out her blog at

myvoicemyjourney.com

or follow her on Instagram:

https://www.instagram.com/my_voice_my_journey/ ■

FROM THE PSYCHOLOGIST: COVID STRESS

— Continued

important to be informed about it. Knowing what you are dealing with, what to expect, and how others have managed it are critical in developing a realistic picture of the event and having a factual basis for discriminating between bad and good information. Without going into too much detail, let us briefly review what we know about the virus from information disseminated by the Center for Disease Control.

According to the CDC, the virus is highly contagious and transmitted from one person to another, is airborne, affects the respiratory system, and ranges from mild to severe, with moderate and severe cases requiring hospitalizations. Persons of any age can be infected by “respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks.” The CDC added that the “droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.” The incubation phase, the time between transmission and onset of symptoms, is from two to 14 days, while length of recovery varies. Of importance, an infected person who is without symptoms, meaning they do not know that they are carrying the virus, can infect others, and there are no known vaccines or cures for COVID-19 currently. Based on available information, the virus does not spare anyone; however, people over 65 years of age and persons with pre-existing medical conditions are at greater risk of complications after becoming infected.

KNOWLEDGE OF COVID-19 SYMPTOMS

The CDC, in its latest update, reports the following symptoms: cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fever, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, and new loss of taste or smell. The CDC also reports the following five “emergency warning signs” for seeking immediate emergency medical care: trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion, inability to wake or stay awake and bluish lips or face. Given these characteristics, the CDC recommends that you wear a mask when going outside and to frequent places of business. Practice social distancing by keeping at least six feet away from others and avoid group gatherings. Close physical contact such as handshakes, hugging, and kissing are also discouraged.

With such knowledge, most of us would feel capable of protecting ourselves. Some, however, will struggle because they do not want to change, with their stress at that point resulting from their resistance. Others, like healthcare workers and other essential service providers such as supermarket employees and the like, pressured into service with inadequate support or equipment, can become stressed at the perceived lack of sensitivity of employers and/or the thought that they are putting their lives and those of their family in danger. The point here is that the source of the stress associated with the virus can directly or indirectly be related to it. Most

Continued on next page

of you, however, despite some complaints about being inconvenienced, would feel empowered by the above information. That knowledge is likely to make you feel confident you could avoid or significantly decrease the risk of being infected.

KNOWLEDGE OF SELF

The next step in managing stress is self-awareness. How do you know you are stressed? The first thing you want to do is look for changes in yourself. Are you more irritable than usual? Do you feel more nervous, fearful, and/or tense? Are you worried most of the time and cannot stop worrying no matter what you try? Are you more forgetful? Are you having more headaches and neck and shoulder pain? Is your sleep disturbed, or are you having difficulty falling or staying asleep? Are you having unpleasant and terrifying dreams? Is it more difficult to pay attention or to sustain your focus? Are you having more instances of indigestion or gastrointestinal problems? Are you having more gloomy thoughts about the future that you cannot get out of your head? Are you angrier? Have you had instances when you lost your temper and acted out aggressively? Have you been avoiding connecting with people, feeling like you do not want to be bothered? Do you find it harder to work than before? These questions, while not being exhaustive, would help you focus on and determine whether there has been an unwanted and negative change. Like most adults, you know your usual stress signs, although you may not heed them, letting the stress wear your body down until you crumble. In the following section, I will present the CDC's recommendations, which I fully endorse, for managing stress associated with COVID-19.

CDC'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRESS REDUCTION

- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.
- Take care of your body.
- Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate.
- Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals.
- Exercise regularly and get plenty of sleep.
- Avoid alcohol and drugs.
- Make time to unwind.
- Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
- Connect with others.

A GENERIC COPING PROGRAM

The CDC's recommendations include in broad terms the elements that are important for an effective stress reduction program. Below I provide some elaboration on deep breathing, exercise, and social support recommendations as well as add a social spiritual component. For more coping exercises and

ideas on how to control your stress level, I recommend the "Relaxation Workbook" by Martha Davis and her colleagues. In this excellent book, they provide a compilation of exercises and stress reduction procedures. Below are two such procedures for your consideration.

CONTROLLED BREATHING

Controlled breathing procedures are remarkably effective in shifting the mind and body from the stress to the relaxation response. They tend to have a calming effect and help prevent tension buildup. They are easy to learn and can be used almost anywhere. Below I will describe two such exercises.

1. Cleansing breath

In this exercise, you are simulating the sighing response. First, find a private spot. You can be sitting or lying down. Keep your eyes open if you want, but most people report finding the exercise more soothing with eyes closed. Sit up straight, breathe in deeply, taking in as much air as you can through your nostrils, hold it for one second, saying "one-one thousand" to yourself. Then, open your mouth and breathe out while allowing your shoulders to drop and your body to collapse as you push out as much air as you can. Repeat this procedure two more times for a set of three. Recommendations: three sets with three seconds between sets every two hours from waking up to bedtime.

2. Diaphragmatic Breathing

This exercise is a little more involved. You need to allocate at least 10 minutes for it, although the actual exercise time takes only 5 minutes. Find a place where you have privacy and will not be disturbed. Turn off your phone and any device that could intrude on your time. Have an alarm clock or timing device with you. Lie down in a bed or sit comfortably in a chair with a headrest and allow yourself to get as comfortable as you can. Set the timer for five minutes, put it down, and close your eyes. Place one hand on your abdomen and one on your chest. Shift your attention to your breathing and focus on how you are breathing without taking control of it. As you breathe, you should feel the hand on your abdomen move higher than the one on your chest. That is a good sign that you are breathing deeply. After three breaths, take control of your breathing and breathe in through your nostrils at a rate comfortable for you, taking in as much air as can. At the first sign of discomfort, open your mouth and breathe out at a rate comfortable for you. After completely exhaling, repeat the procedure until the timer goes off. Once the timer goes off, the practice is over. Most people tend to fall asleep doing this exercise, the purpose of the timer is to prevent you from falling asleep. Recommendation: daily practice, adding one minute every week until you get to 15 minutes. While doing this exercise, you may have difficulty focusing on your breathing. Be patient with yourself; just redirect you thinking to your breathing after you realize that you have shifted your focus.

EXERCISE

Walking for at least 20 minutes daily, or at a minimum, three times a week has been associated with improved well-being. Please keep in mind and practice physical distancing while walking.

SOCIAL SUPPORT

I recommend you practice social connecting with family and friends through social media. This is not a time to be isolated emotionally or socially. Reach out to other people and respond to their effort to connect with you. Through interactions with them, you will be able to validate and normalize your experience. When isolated, it is easy to lose a sense of perspective and to become overly attached to your thoughts and feelings.

SPIRITUAL

Praying, or addressing any higher power believed capable of providing protection, facilitating success, or bringing about a desired wish, is an often-neglected coping mechanism. The point is that it does not matter which higher power you pray or address your concern to. Of importance here is your belief. Your higher power may be the God of Christianity, Allah of Islam, a Voodoo loa, a Santeria spirit, or an energy source. If you believe that bringing your concerns to his/her attention or connecting to that energy source will help you, do it. From a psychological point, allying yourself with a higher power lessens the feeling that you are carrying your burden alone, makes you feel stronger thinking that strength is on your side or that you are more powerful because you are allied with an omnipotent entity. Patients have told me that after placing their burden in the hands of God, they felt a tremendous sense of relief, and that God either helped them find the solution or solve their problem.

SUGGESTED STRESS REDUCTION PROGRAM

1. Embrace the safety recommendations from the CDC.
2. Select a relaxation procedure to practice i.e., meditation, controlled breathing, or the use of a relaxation tape, to exercise relaxation at least three times a week. Set a time for this activity and stick to it. If you get distracted and/or forget to do it, just go back to it as soon as you realize that you have deviated from the plan.
3. Choose a cardiovascular activity i.e., walking, jogging, Pilates and the like, and do it daily or three times a week for at least 20 minutes. Set a time for this activity and stick to it. If you get distracted and/or forget to do it, just go back to it as soon as you realize that you have deviated from the plan.

Reach out to a family member and/or friend at least every other day if you live alone. If you have a family, organize, or join them in group activities such board or video games, movie nights, and the like. Older parents living away are in greater need of contacts now than before to prevent social isolation.

Research has shown a correlation between social isolation and death in older people.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Stress is a necessary part of life. It is a signal that alerts us to potential danger. In moderation, it assists us in solving problems and adapting to our environment. On the other hand, a prolonged period of heightened stress can lead to physical, mental, and psychological disturbances. While stress affects everyone, the same event is not stressful to all people, and the stress level of an event can vary for the same person depending on time and life circumstances. Because of this, stress, or lack of it, always results from a person's perception of an event as dangerous and not having the necessary resources to handle it. COVID-19 is being perceived by most people as a dangerous event, and since the disruptions associated with it are also seen as potentially aversive, many are prone to experience significant discomfort as we search for ways to cope with it. While I have suggested ways for dealing with it, I would like to add some caveats.

Dr. John B. Arden in his book "Rewire the Brain" argues that to change your actions you need to change your brain, and asserts that to be successful in that endeavor, you need to "FEED" your brain. In feeding your brain, Dr. Arden indicates that you need to do four things, three of which I want to introduce here as I have combined two steps into one.

First, you must focus your attention on what you want to do: lower your stress. By concentrating your attention on your goal, you eliminate distractions and can invest your effort where it counts.

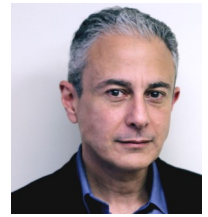
Second, he asserts that you must invest effort into wanting to change your behaviors, or in this case, to reduce your stress. This is based on neuroscience research literature indicating that to change your behaviors and maintain the changes on a consistent basis, you must push yourself beyond your comfort level. This means that you must work at making the changes you desire by investing time and effort in carrying out the stress-reducing exercises on a regular basis. Although you may not notice any immediate gain, you are strengthening and building new connections in your brain and decreasing your stress every time you practice.

Third, combining his last two elements into one here, is fusing "effortless" and "determination." I agree, that based on neuroscience research literature, practice and determination are indispensable to causing the changes in the brain that underlie learning and any persistent behavior change. Determination means that you must want to change and will keep at it. This does not mean that you cannot be distracted but that once you realize it, you would return to your program. Each time you practice, it gets easier, requiring less effort. With regular practice, what once seemed alien becomes familiar, and with familiarity comes automaticity, ease, and speed. By developing a stress reduction program for yourself that includes the safety guidelines, and at least a relaxation procedure, physical exercise, and social connecting, you can expect to notice changes in about four to six weeks. By implementing your personal stress reduction program, you will likely decrease your stress level, improve your health, and fine tune your brain into a smarter and better problem-solving organ for more effective management of present and future stressful events. ■

CENSUS 2020

CENSUS 2020: AN INTRODUCTION

*By Hayg Oshagan
Wayne State University
Director of New Michigan Media*



Hayg Oshagan

What is the census?

The U. S. Constitution requires that the federal government count every person living in the U.S. The U.S. Census has been conducted every 10 years since 1790.

Why is the Census important?

Every year, the federal government gives money it has collected from taxes back to the states. How much money a state gets depends on how many people live in that state. And the count of how many people live in a state is determined every 10 years by the Census. So if a state has a low Census count, it will get less money from the federal government, every year, for the 10 years after the Census count. Recently, Michigan has gotten about \$30 billion a year based on the 2010 Census. In addition to federal funds, how many representatives a state has in the U.S. Congress also depends on a state's population, which is determined by the Census. Because of a low Census count, Michigan lost a Congressional seat in 2010, going from 15 Congressmen and Congresswomen in the U.S. House of Representatives, to the current 14.

What is the money used for?

The \$30 billion Michigan gets every year is used by the state, used by counties, used by Native American tribes, and used by cities for programs that serve our communities. This is money that funds our kids' **education** (student loans, Pell grants, school lunches and breakfasts, Headstart, school funding), helps with **health care** (Medicare, Medicaid, Urgent Care, children's health insurance/MI Child), is used for **food assistance** (Supplemental Nutrition, Bridge Cards, Meals on Wheels), **housing loans**, **road construction**, **transit**, and any program that helps our communities grow and prosper.

What happens if the count is low?

Michigan, and every county and city in Michigan, gets a lot less money for all the programs the Census pays for. As an example, for Detroit, every person not counted would cost the city \$5,500 every year for 10 years. If 3% of Detroiters don't get counted (about 20,000 people), Detroit would lose \$1 billion over the next 10 years.

Who should be counted?

Everyone. The Census counts everyone who is living in America. It doesn't matter if you are a citizen or not a citizen, if you have a Green Card, or a visitor visa, or an expired visa, a student with an F1 visa or an employee with an H-1b visa, if you live in the U.S., you count for the Census.

The only people not counted are those who are here as tourists, and are planning to return to their home country. Everyone else counts. Make sure to count everyone in your household, including children and newborns. And if you sublet to anyone, you need to count them too.

What is a household?

For the Census, a household is an address. The Census does not have names, it only has addresses. There are about 140 million addresses in the U.S., and the Census is sent to each of those addresses. People who live in groups with a single address (jails, hospitals, nursing homes, school dormitories, etc.) are also counted.

Is the Census confidential?

The United State has a law specifically for the Census, to make sure it is 100% confidential. The Census Act, Title 12, of the United States Code, has the strictest confidentiality laws on the federal books.

The information collected by the Census CANNOT be shared with ANY other agency. It cannot be given to ICE, to the FBI, to Homeland Security, the Department of Justice, the IRS, local police, the sheriff, social service agencies, insurance companies, businesses or anyone. For any reason. And over the last 50+ years, this law has never been broken, not even once.

How many questions are on the Census?

The Census is 9 questions. That's it. And there is no question about your citizenship or visa status. The Census only cares to know if you live in the U.S.

Continued on next page

What comes in the mail?

In the past, the Census was a paper questionnaire. This year, most people will get a card in the mail with a unique ID that you use to fill out the Census online. Where the internet is slow, people will get the paper version to fill out and send back. People can also call in and complete the Census on the phone.

The Census is mailed on March 12. If you don't respond, you will get reminders on March 16, March 23, April 8, and April 20.

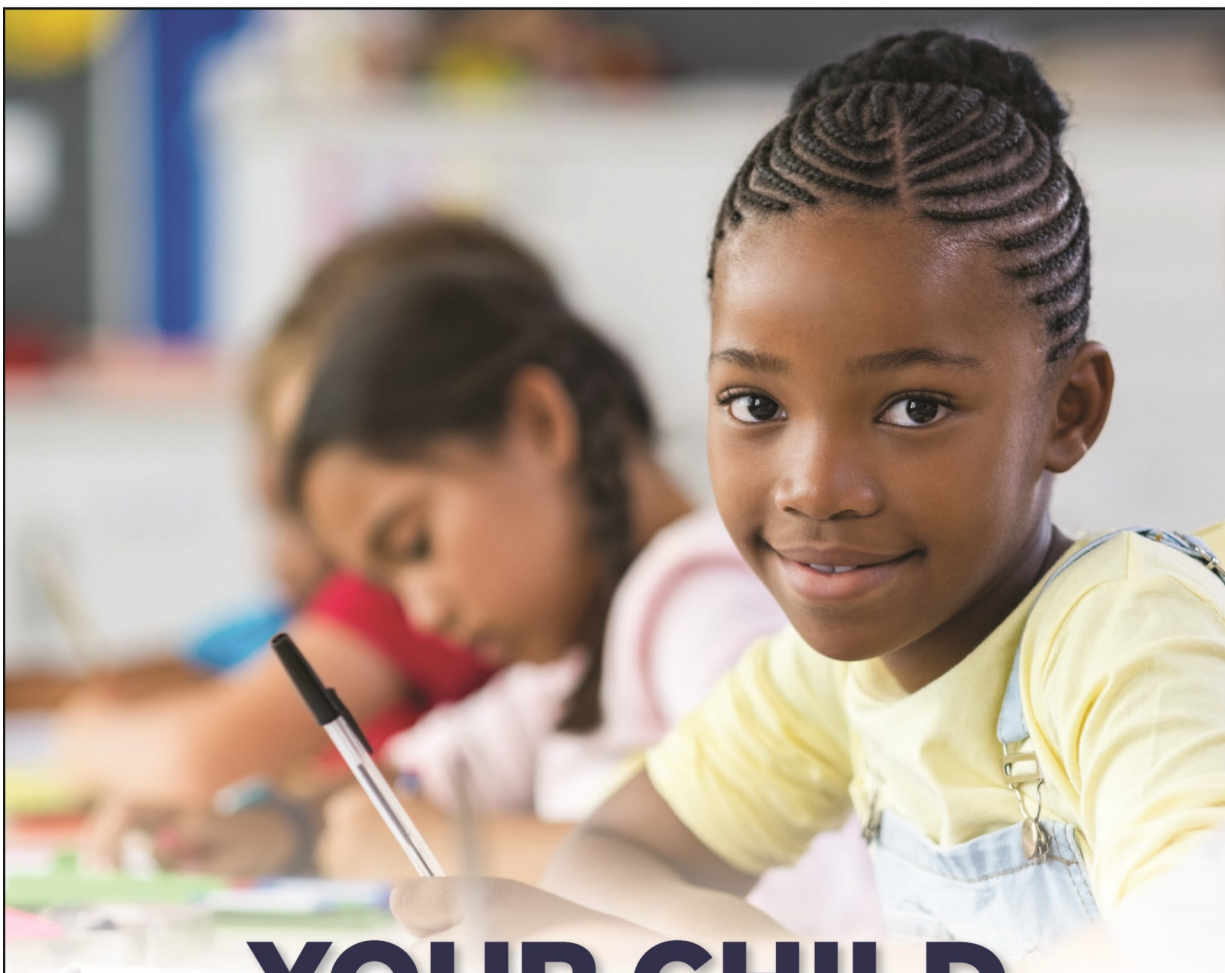
Will someone knock on my door?

If you don't send the Census back by the end of April, Census workers will come to your door. They have badges and identification from the Census Bureau, and they will ask you to complete the Census. It is much better to fill it out on your own, and not wait for the Census workers to come by. We get a much better count that way.

We only have one chance to get counted. There is a lot of funding tied to the U.S. Census that helps everyone in our communities, from our children to the elderly. Make sure to fill it out when you get it. The 10 minutes we spend filling out the Census now will affect our communities for the next 10 years. ■

MORE PICTURES OF HNGD "SOUP JOUMOU" GATHERING





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And Complete
The 2020
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"PROTECTING OUR HERITAGE BY PROTECTING OURSELVES"

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- Stay Home
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From The Chapman Gang



PICTURES OF HNGD “SOUP JOUMOU” GATHERING

