

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- EDITOR'S NOTE 1
- PRESIDENT'S LETTER 1-2
- FROM THE NUTRITION COACH DESK 2-3
- GRADUATION 4-5
- WHERE ARE THEY NOW ? 5
- COMMUNITY NEWS & EVENTS 6-13
- IN MEMORIAM 12-14
- THE LITERARY CORNER 15-18

Editor: Dr. Jean-Claude Dutès

Assistant Editor : Réjane Pierre
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

EDITOR'S NOTE



Hello,
Welcome back!

In these unsettling times, it is difficult to distinguish the light of a coming train from that of dawn as we push forward on the path of uncertainty.

Standing still is not an option, and neither is going backward, for the door to the past is no longer accessible. But we may pause for a little while to take stock as to where we are and contemplate where we want to go.

There are signs portentous of hopeful developments: such as the outcome of the 2020 elections, the emergence of the need for racial justice in this country, the substitution of knowledge for ignorance in managing the pandemic and the resiliency of our democratic institutions, but we are not out of the woods yet. As Amanda Gorman has said with an eloquence that I cannot match, we are not a broken nation but one with unfinished business.

Happy new year, with wishes of good health, happiness, and the wisdom to make the right choices for you moving forward.

In this issue, among other things, you will learn about the effects of COVID-19 on our graduates, the premature death of two members of our Detroit community, the transformational effects of encountering Haiti and adopting a Haitian boy on a mother, the boy, and the other members of her family. We also offer two short stories likely to evoke myriad thoughts and emotions. Of note, we took time to salute Professor Guerin Montilus on his retirement. A dedicated educator and noted anthropologist, Dr. Montilus, a fervent supporter of HNGD who has been generous with his time and knowledge, could

always be counted on to help when asked, and is a pillar of our Detroit community.

I hope you will find reading this issue as pleasant, if not more, than the others, and wish you a happy reading.

Jean-Claude Dutès, Ph.D., Editor
Retired Clinical Neuropsychologist ■

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear HNGD Members, Friends and Supporters,



We have thankfully seen the end of 2020... What a year! Our community suffered the loss of three members; two of them within months of each other. Because of COVID-19, these past nine months have been very challenging on many levels. If some of us were lucky enough to not have been infected, we have had family members, friends or colleagues who were affected or worse, lost the battle against this dreadful disease. And yet, in spite of the turmoil and destabilization created by the ubiquitous virus, there are some silver linings worth celebrating.

For HNGD, 2020 will also be remembered as the year of networking on a local and national level. We were privileged to play a small part in the Herculean effort coordinated by Boston's Haitian Americans United Inc. (HAU). We participated along with Haitian American organizations in 12 other states in different programs that highlighted issues that are crucial to communities all over the US: the 2020 Census, COVID-19 and the importance of exercising one's right to vote. The

Continued on next page

last event culminated in a Rally-the-Vote gathering that started at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History in Detroit. While respecting the rules of social distancing, wearing masks and with plenty of hand sanitizers and a bullhorn to galvanize passersby, representatives from Haitian Network Group of Detroit, Caribbean Carnival & Cultural Organization, Caribbean Community Service Center and African Bureau of Immigration and Social Affairs led a non-partisan march that ended in the vicinity of the Detroit Department of Elections.

The local connection goes beyond the march. HNGD has also established a link with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Wayne County Community College. Last Spring, we were invited by both organizations to make a virtual presentation about Haitian culture. In a similar vein, we have continued to strengthen our relationship with Wayne State University and the DuSable Heritage Association in Chicago; thanks to our Editor and former board member, Dr. Jean-Claude Dutès, we were introduced to the newly formed L'Ouverture Cultural Society based in Florida.

COVID-19 may have slowed HNGD down, but it did not stop us. Rather than remaining stagnant or idle, we have learned to adapt to the new normal and found ways to move forward. Thanks to the technical support that we received from the University of Detroit Mercy Immigration Law Clinic and the South Eastern Michigan HIV AIDS Council, our first attempt at hosting a webinar went off without a hitch. Not only was the remote presentation well attended, it was also well received. Likewise, undeterred by the forced confinement, the Bèl Bagay Lakay Committee is keeping busy; a virtual version of the biennial Haitian Art & Craft Festival is currently being planned for the summer of 2021. But wait... That's not all! I saved the most scrumptious morsel for last... HNGD also made a splash on the national scene! Our yearly Soup Joumou event has caught the attention of the New York Times. The HNGD board recently completed an interview that was incorporated in a December 29, 2020 article in the paper's Food Section.

Looking back, we may have suffered some cuts and bruises along the way; however, as an organization, we managed to prevail. It's been a year that has taught us all to be resilient, flexible and patient. The silver lining for HNGD has been the strengthened relationships with old friends and the formation of new alliances. It's time to kick 2020 to the curb! We are so ready to spread our wings and take advantage of every opportunity 2021 will bring our way.

Each of you plays an important role in keeping this organization alive and relevant, and I greatly appreciate everything you have done and continue to do to make HNGD what it is today. Until we can meet again, I wish you and your loved ones healing, peace of mind, good health and many blessings in the year to come.

Bonn Ane! Meilleurs Vœux! Happy New Year !

Maggy Corkery ■

FROM THE NUTRITION COACH DESK

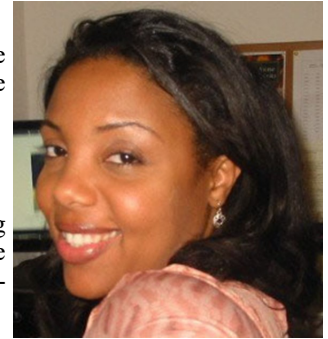
FIVE STEPS TO QUELL CRAVINGS FOR SWEETS

By Carmina Mevs

Ever feel like you tip the scale just by inhaling too deeply in the bakery section?

So frustrating!

Sweet treats are the one thing that, no matter how "good" I've been all day, always end up sabotaging my evenings.



I can remember this one night (although, to be honest I had many more just like it), where I had been so good all week. I'd eaten salads, grilled chicken and about a million rice cakes with fat-free peanut butter.

I was sitting on the couch on that Thursday night, catching up on the latest season of my favorite show, *Outlander*, and all I could think about was the sweet and crunchy taste of candy. I was doing all the things I could think of to distract myself, but nothing worked, and that sweet craving was all I could focus on.

I was literally powerless to stop myself from getting in the car in the dead of the night and drive to the nearest Walgreens to get myself a bag of Tootsie Roll lollipops.

"I'm just going to have one piece, maybe two..." that's what I told myself... "I am definitely saving some for tomorrow!"

Well...two episodes and a stomachache later, I am staring at the bottom of an empty bag, trying hard not to cry in self-loathing for my pitiful lack of self-control.

And all I am left with is a bitter mixture of guilt, shame and so much anger at myself.

Why did it always end up like this? Why did willpower always desert me when it came to sweets?

I knew there HAD to be a reason and a solution to those crazy-pants sugar cravings, and finding that out became my obsession for the following three years.

But let's face it, no one really wants to give up sweets; they make life worth living!

Fortunately this is not about NEVER having a treat once in a while, it's about taking back control of your sugar intake because added sugar in processed foods is the primary driver of the obesity epidemic and has direct meta-

Continued on page 2

bolic effects that raise the risk for type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and heart and liver diseases in addition to contributing to your love handles. According to the World Health Organization, 422 million people suffer from diabetes: that's 1 out of 11... And the numbers are on the rise.

The good news is that these diseases are all preventable and managing your blood sugar level is one of the biggest needle movers when it comes to losing weight.

We have been led to believe that eating less and exercising more is all it takes to fit into our high school jeans.

If eating all the "healthy foods" hasn't brought about RESULTS yet, it's because you have not been paying attention to H.I.M.

Settle down Ladies! I'm not talking about men; I'm talking about the three weight loss blockers that affect your body composition:

- * Unbalanced Hormones
- * Chronic Inflammation
- * Sluggish Metabolism

These three blockers have one common trigger: blood sugar swings.

Stabilizing blood sugar levels (even if you are not diabetic) is the number one needle mover when it comes to getting to and maintaining a healthy weight.

Today I no longer believe that willpower can be taught or strengthened. I also don't believe that willpower should be a THING when it comes to food.

Willpower is HARD. Using willpower implies a constant struggle...and I, for one, don't want food to feel that way.

Which is why I've learned how to avoid using it altogether. Sounds crazy, I know...but here's what I learned: we are unknowingly causing our cravings with certain foods that throw our bodies off balance. But there is a way of eating that will make your cravings disappear effortlessly and you won't need willpower to tame your sweet tooth.

To get you started, I want to share with you 5 Painless Ways To Curb Your Sugar Cravings Without Willpower

#1 Check Your Bevvies!

Sounds crazy, but sometimes sweet cravings are a sign of dehydration...so have a glass of water, set a timer for 10 minutes (don't skip this step) and if you still want your treat when the bell goes off, go for it!

#2 Sniff Out Low-Fat and Fat Free Foods

Weird, I know! But when food manufacturers take the fat out of foods, what do you think they put in instead? You guessed it, sugar! So, go ahead take a sniff!

#3 Sleep

For many of us, this is easier said than done. But if you're

constantly tired, your body is going to look for energy, usually in the form of sugar or caffeine. Power down an hour earlier than usual and notice how your cravings start to disappear.

#4 Check Your Protein

This is a fun, cool fact - watch how much protein and what kind of protein you're eating, especially animal protein. Eating too little animal protein can lead to massive, sweet cravings, and so can eating too much. When I work with clients, we find just the right sweet spot for protein intake, so they leave the table satisfied and watch their cravings disappear.

#5 Move Yo'self!

Movement is another kind of food for your body. It releases stress and makes you feel good about yourself. When you don't get enough exercise, the body starts to look for other ways to blow off steam, like bingeing on Snickers bars and Tootsie Roll lollipops.

There you have it - 5 simple yet effective tips to get off the blood sugar roller coaster and get a fresh start in 2021.

Byline: Carmina Mevs is the founder of the Fit & Healthy After 40 Club and a certified Precision Nutrition Level 1 Coach. In her practice, she helps health-conscious women over 40 lose up to 10% body weight in 90 days or less without giving up foods they love.

Download your FREE 9-Step Cheat Sheet For Making Your 2021 Wellness Goals a Reality at <http://bit.ly/2021-fresh-start>

Carmina Mevs, CHC, Pn1
Certified Health Coach
Phone 908-998-1723
Email carminamevs@gmail.com
Website CarminaMevs.com ■



The HNGD Board Members

Maggy Corkery - President
Alain Desvallons Mentor - Vice President
Janny Magloire Milton- Secretary
Shirley Alc  Konat  - Treasurer ■



MEET THE GRADUATES



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

THE SOARING EAGLE: AN ACTIVE YOUNG MAN IN FLIGHT



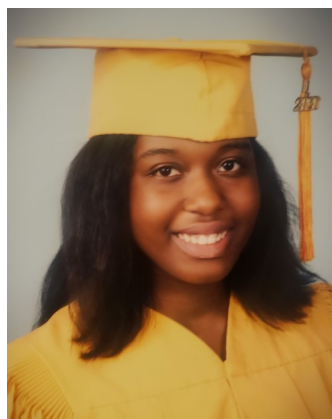
Donovan Hails is the son of Walter and Carine Hails, who live in Canton, MI. He graduated from Brother Rice High School in Bloomfield Hills, MI, where he was a member of the National Honor Society and the Spanish Honor Society. He also served as a Student Ambassador, earned a varsity letter in football, and ran track.

In addition to these scholastic activities, Donovan achieved the rank of Eagle Scout, the highest rank of honor within the Boy Scouts of America, served as a youth usher at New Hope Church, participated in the Midnight Golf Program, served as the Vice President of the Oakland County Chapter of the Alpha Esquires, served as President of the Teen Group of the Ypsilanti chapter of Jack and Jill of America, and worked as a caddie at Meadowbrook Country Club.

Donovan is proud of his Haitian heritage. Throughout elementary school, he would make displays about Haiti and Haitian-Americans for school projects. A lover of cars, he was especially excited to present at an exhibit featuring automobile designer Ralph Gilles. During multicultural celebrations, he would ask his mother to bring his all-time favorite Haitian food, “banan peze” – freshly fried smashed plantain slices, to share at school.

Currently, Donovan is a freshman at Michigan State University where he plans to major in business. He participated in the Multicultural Summer Business Institute and is actively involved with the Alternative Investments Group and the Student Investment Association. Most notably, he recently was offered an internship position with Plante Moran for the summer of 2021. His grandmother, Ghislaine Lamaze, would have been very proud of him! ■

GRADUATING AND MOVING FORWARD IN A PANDEMIC



Nina Thomas

“Class of 2020: the class with perfect vision” is the phrase I have heard my entire life. However, that perfect vision of the future was shattered when my school, and life around me as I knew it, shut down on March 13, 2020. I never expected to graduate in the middle of a pandemic and could not have imagined that my graduation

would be like pulling through a fast-food drive-through.



Instead of McDonald’s, I was driving through my school’s bus loop picking up a goodie bag and my cap and gown. Transitioning from in-person to online was hard but manageable since I have grown up with technology surrounding me my entire life. Going from in-person to Zoom was definitely different and unexpected. The advancement of technology helped a lot. It allowed me to keep in contact with my friends, strengthening my connection with them while in quarantine, which helped me survive and make it through to graduation and the beginning of college.

The graduation ceremony was a separate event from receiving my actual diploma. So, when I drove by myself once again through my school’s bus loop to pick up the official paper that said I graduated in June of 2020, that’s when everything felt real, that I had truly moved on from high school and was going to college.

Visiting schools is a major part of the decision-making process, but I could not do that with the pandemic hitting around the time

Continued on page 2

I had set aside to visit the top schools on my list. Picking a school felt strange: that I was not able to visit in person and to feel a vibe affected my decision negatively, but I still have hope I will find the right fit for my pursuing higher education.

After living in New York for three months, going to school in the big city, I knew that was the place I wanted to be for my current career path. Studying communications opens many different doors in marketing, journalism, and film, all occupations I am interested in, and after finishing my first semester, I knew I had picked the right major, even if the school I chose is not the right fit for right now.

Living through this pandemic is certainly nothing I ever expected to go through, but I am making the most of it. I have high hopes that choosing interesting classes, talking with my friends and family, and continuing to pursue my passions and discover new ones will guide me in the right direction for my future. ■



Aias Y. Danier graduated from De La Salle Collegiate High School in the summer of 2020. He is now attending Purdue University, pursuing a degree in computer engineering.

His latest achievement comes at a bittersweet moment when pandemic is claiming so many lives and affecting the way we interact with each other.

Prom was canceled for fear of COVID-19 infections. Graduation ceremony was virtual, and all social interaction was limited.

A first semester at Purdue in isolation and a college experience that defies the very essence of collaboration, interaction with peers feel more like a broken promise.

Nevertheless, he remains highly optimistic and convinced that science will prevail, and the best days are yet to come. ■



WHERE ARE THEY NOW ?



Rilka Noël

A California native and a former soccer player for the Youth U.S. National Soccer team, as well as the Haitian National Team and the University of Notre Dame, Rilka Noël has a love for art, community and teamwork. Rilka currently lives in Brooklyn and works for fashion streetwear brand Kith. Previously, she worked with women-owned independent accessories brand, Loeffler Randall. At Kith, Rilka works in e-commerce and marketing strategy with a team of collaborators that is growing its base globally and widening its voice socially. She has modeled with MAC Cosmetics and Labucq and was recently interviewed by New York Magazine and Refinery29 about her viral trendspotting of the “leopard midi skirt” (@leopardmidiskirt on Instagram). She was included on Wall Street Journal’s roundup of 2019 Summer Trends. Rilka enjoys cooking, baking and hiking. Her favorite color is yellow. ■

Caroline Charles

Although her sons Alex, Alain and Serge-Philippe are still in Michigan, Caroline Charles could not resist the temptation of being able to enjoy the warm weather and the outdoors all year round. After having called Detroit home for 18 years, Caroline moved to Cocoa, a small city in Brevard County, Florida. Rather than sending a picture of herself, she chose to share with us this magnificent sunset that she gets to admire on a daily basis, so that we can see for ourselves the reason she does not miss Michigan’s winter wonderland. Nonetheless, she frequently visits our area, to spend some time with her two precious grandchildren: Soley, 5 months old, and Jayden, 10 years old. Caroline is currently working at Cape Canaveral Hospital in Preop/ Recovery. She does not work directly with COVID-19 patients, but just like the rest of us, she is frustrated, mentally exhausted and very saddened about a disease that has caused so many deaths and continues to affect a myriad of people in the world. How is she able to go on, you may wonder...?

Just look at the picture she sent us. That’s the best antidote to doom and gloom anyone can ask for!!! ■





GREETINGS FROM DUSABLE HERITAGE ASSOCIATION (DHA)!

We would like to thank Haitian Network of Greater Detroit (HNGD) for giving us the opportunity to highlight some of DuSable Heritage Association's activities in 2020.

We started 2020 with the inauguration of a Black History Month Lecture series. This premiere was spearheaded by our Secretary and Historian Courtney P. Joseph. Dr. Joseph partnered with a wide range of scholars to offer presentations on such topics as the intersection of Haitian and African American history through the centuries (from the migration of African-Americans to Haiti in the 19th Century to Frederick Douglass representing Haiti at the 1893 World Fair in Chicago), the role of Jean-Baptiste Pointe DuSable and his Potawatomi wife Kittihawa in the history of early Chicago, a cross-generational study of Haitian culture in the Chicago Diaspora.

From left to right: Mr. Etzer Cantave, Mr. Claude Marcelin and Mr. Frantz Dossous



This year, we celebrated our 20th Anniversary on March 7th, right before the City of Chicago shut down due to the pandemic. We were fortunate to have the only live in-person event for the year thanks to our loyal supporters, donors, and hard work by the event's co-hosts Marie-Josée Saint-Preux, Frantz Dossous, and Nicolas Paul. For the first time, DHA has had a live performance by a top Haitian musician, Mr. Claude Marcelin from Montreal, Canada.



From Left: Mr. Etzer Cantave, Ms. Maggy Corkery, Ms. Shirley Alc  Konat  & Mr. Nicolas Paul

We thank our attendees and specially the HNGD board who made the trip to be with us.

Then, the Coronavirus surged and devastated lives and livelihoods. Congress responded with the enactment of the Coro-

navirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to provide relief to the millions of Americans affected economically by the pandemic. As a service to the community, DHA published a simplified version of this elaborate piece of legislation to connect them to the services they were entitled to.

Despite COVID-19, we had good news about DuSable Park, the focal point of our advocacy effort. In June, The Chicago Plan Commission approved Related Midwest's Development Plan, which includes the construction of DuSable Park and a \$10M commitment by the developer. In July, Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot issued an ordinance authorizing the funding of another \$5M toward the project. The ordinance was unanimously voted by the City Council in September. This brought DuSable Park the closest to fruition that it has ever been in the past three decades. We salute the efforts of our own Dr. Serge Pierre-Louis, DHA founder and past president, who has tirelessly worked to that end.

On August 29th, to mark the 202nd anniversary of DuSable's death, the DuSable Park Coalition celebrated the annual Memorial in honor of Jean-Baptiste Pointe DuSable. Due to the City of Chicago's COVID-19 mitigation measures, the event took on a hybrid format—in-person with a limited number of attendees and virtual via a livestream and Facebook. Participating organizations included Chicago History Museum, Bronzeville Children Museum, the Magnificent Mile Association, the Floating Museum, Native American Chamber of Commerce, DHA. (add others including photos).



Dr. Serge Pierre-Louis (Center)

Our last event for the year was the 28th annual film festival in collaboration with the African Diaspora International Film Festival (ADIFF) and the Haitian American Museum of Chicago (HAMOC). The event featured the screening of DHA's video "Founder's Trail Tour" and ADIFF's film "Thus Spoke the Sea." The event was well received and a

lively conversation with the movie director, Arnold Antonin, followed the screening. We apologize to our HNGD friends for some glitches in the registration process that may have disrupted their plan to join the event.

Thank you again.

Happy Holidays! Godspeed in 2021!

Etzer Cantave
President ■



CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY SERVICE CENTER (CCSC): Third Annual Forget Columbus Day Fundraiser Honors Representative Andy Levin for legislation regarding Jamaican LGBTI rights.

On October 15, 2020, the Caribbean Community Service Center (CCSC) hosted its Third Annual Forget Columbus Day Fundraiser via Zoom. Proceeds benefited CCSC and the Black Immigrant Bail Fund, which is a National Project of the Haitian Bridge Alliance (HBA) and ABISA.

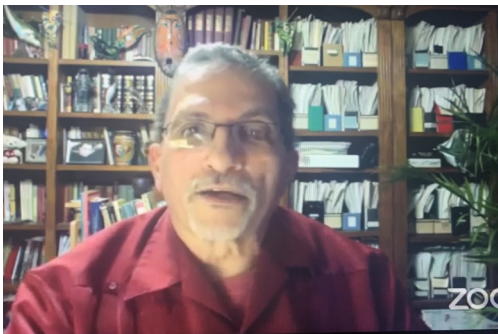


Rep. Andy Levin

Rep. Andy Levin (D-Michigan) received a Community Advocacy Award for his lifetime legacy of human rights work on behalf of immigrants, LGBTQ individuals and victims of oppression. Levin has worked in Haiti as an election monitor and in the US as a union organizer for Haitian Immigrants. In early 2020, as a member of the U.S. House Foreign Affairs committee, Western Hemisphere subcommittee, Levin authored legislation that was part of the U.S. State Department's funding bill. Levin said, "I authored language that highlights our concerns around discrimination against LGBTI persons in Jamaica and urged the Secretary of State to engage with the government of Jamaica to reform discriminatory laws." He added that "the work has been a highlight of my first term in Congress." The bill received bipartisan support in its passage.

Other awardees include the following:

- ◆ Margareth Corkery, President of Haitian Group Network of Detroit (Sports Arts and Culture);
- ◆ Dr. Jorge Chinaa, Professor and Director of the Center for Latino/a and Latin American Studies at Wayne State University (Education)



Dr. Jorge Chinaa

- ◆ Fatou-Seydi Sarr, Executive Director, African Bureau of Immigration and Community Affairs (ABISA) (Community Service), and
- ◆ Akindele Akinyemi, President and CEO, Global African Business Association for Professional Development

Sophia Chue served as emcee for the event while Robert Shimkoski was Chairman of the Forget Columbus Day Committee. Gracie Xavier was the Zoom Call Organizer. The event can be viewed anytime on Youtube at <https://youtu.be/2zNX49-WEe4>.



Sophia Chue



Gracie Xavier



Robert Shimkoski

Formed in 2017, CCSC serves to support, empower, and advocate for a beneficial, welcoming, and inclusive environment for Caribbean Nationals as they adapt to life in the United States. For more information visit CCSC's website at caribbeancommunitysc.org. ■

HNGD JOINS OTHERS TO ENCOURAGE EVERY ONE TO VOTE

By Charlot Lucien

The Haitian Network Group of Detroit was pleased to be part of a national non-partisan civic engagement activity on Oct 24, National Vote Early, as part of getting Haitian-Americans to be more involved in the electoral process that culminated in the November 4th, 2020 elections.

VOTE EARLY! VOTE YOUR INTEREST! VOTE RESPECT!

**A Caribbean & African-Led
Non-Partisan Rally in Support of
National Vote Early Day**

**RALLY
THE VOTE**

RALLY TIME: Saturday, October 24, 2020 @ 2:00pm - 4:00pm
STARTING POINT: Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History
315 E. Warren, Detroit, MI 48201
ROUTE: West on Warren Ave., then North on Cass Ave.
FINAL DESTINATION: Detroit Department of Elections (West Grand Blvd.)

Metro-Detroit: immigrant communities let's present a united front to encourage citizens to exercise their right to vote! Bring your Caribbean or African flag! Come represent!
MASKS ARE MANDATORY AND SOCIAL DISTANCING WILL BE ENFORCED!

This event is part of a 12-state movement led by Haitian-American organizations to coordinate a comprehensive voter engagement strategy and call the change to further engage immigrant communities in future local, regional and national electoral processes.

For more information: 313-268-9250
info@hngdetroit.org

HNGD **IFSI** **IFSI-USA**

This effort, coordinated by the Haitian Americans United Inc., the Haitian American Voter Empowerment Coalition (HAVE) and the United Front of the Haitian Diaspora, saw various activities held by eight organizations that engaged in symbolic, small, or large rallies, phone bank activities or webinars in Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, New Hampshire, New

York, Washington DC, and Illinois. In Michigan, the Haitian Network Group of Detroit was joined by allies from the Caribbean and Latinos communities; in places such as Florida, rallies were held to the sound of rara bands while in Massachusetts organizers were able to secure the participation of a US representative, a state senator, and several community leaders in a Zoom conference call and in a rally.

This non-partisan effort involved both Haitian-American voters, their allies, non-voters, TPS recipients, and green card holders - an indication of the scope of the interests at play.



Detroit in action



These activities were a continuation of a collaboration that started back in May 2020, when 12 organizations in 12 States initiated a joint commemoration of Haitian Heritage Month in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, to nurture a sense of community and solidarity and promote a healthy prevention message. These organizations also collaborated to produce a video on census participation in August as part of the larger getting-Haitian-Americans-civically-engaged effort.

We anticipate that such collaborations may continue to take place in the future, helping to build a stronger, more cohesive Haitian-American community attuned to the issues and priorities that may affect its members or the lives of Haitians in general.

List of partners:

- Connecticut: Haitian American Professionals of Connecticut (HAPAC), Sosyete Koukouy
- Florida: Haitian American Voter Empowerment Coalition (HAVE); Family Action Network Movement (FANM)
- Georgia: Haitian American Chamber of Commerce; Haitian On Demand
- Illinois: Congress to Fortify Haiti
- Massachusetts: Haitian Americans United Inc (HAU); Immigrant Family Services Institute (IFSI)
- Michigan: Haitian Network Group of Detroit (HNGD)
- New Hampshire: Haitian Community Center of Manchester
- New York: The Haitian Round Table, Society for Haitian Research
- Washington, DC: United Front of the Haitian Diaspora ■

THANK YOU HAÏTI!

By Patti Alley



My love for Haiti came several years ago on a mission trip to the city of Dessalines. I had no idea how deep and how much my life would change because of the people and the country of Haiti.

I have many titles: Wife, Mom, Grandma and Ms. Patti. My husband and I moved to Haiti in 2012 to live in Port-au-Prince at a mission called Have Faith Haiti. Our job was to speak English and to show the 25+ children the love and respect my husband I had for each other. It was an eye opener to a world that I didn't really understand but was willing to embrace. I could not speak Kreyol; I didn't know the deep history or the culture of the Haitian People. To say I was ill prepared was an understatement. I had to unlearn all the comforts and things that I was taught growing up in America. I needed to humble myself and earn the respect of the Haitian children and staff. I questioned things and I dug in to learn as much as I could. I read and asked many questions. I allowed others to see my weakness and to see my humility.

That year changed my life forever; we met a little boy at an orphanage just 15 minutes away and I couldn't get him out of my heart or my head. January 18, 2013 was the day that God placed our son Benly in my Heart. I didn't take that lightly then and I don't take it lightly now. The children and staff at Have Faith have also made a great impact and continue to be part of our extended family. We decided to move back to Michigan at the end of our one-year commitment and began the process of adoption. Our adoption took over 4 years to complete. I have made over 50 trips to Haiti in the last 8 years and will continue to go back 3-4 times a year. I am on the board of Have Faith Haiti and will be a part of the HFHM family for as long as they will allow.

My son, Benly, lost his Kreyol; he will tell you he lost it on the plane when we landed in America. Each time we go back to Haiti, he looks under the seat to see if he can find it. Our

goal for 2021 is to make sure he gets his Kreyol back. My Kreyol is not the best and I can understand it better than I can speak it. I use it when I need to get his attention, or he gets in trouble. We talk openly about his birth family, his culture, and the importance of always knowing and remembering where he came from. Benly is 10 years old. He has been back to visit Haiti three times in 3 years. WE feel it is very important that he has access to both worlds. We keep bean sauce in our freezer for his comfort food (I have many talents but cooking Haitian food is not one of them) I bring back bean sauce on every visit for him and freeze it. As white parents raising a black Haitian son it is very important that we embrace HIS culture in many ways and we support Him. We are open and honest about any questions he may have and answer them to the best of our ability. I am not afraid to say I don't know but I will find out. We have many friends that we call family in our life to help us raise Benly. We know it takes a village and we are very thankful for the Haitian community that we are a part of both here in Michigan and in Haiti.

Trying to write this article has been difficult for me; my words are many, and my love is deeply rooted in the culture, the people, and the beauty I see. Haiti is more than the poverty and brokenness that is shared in the media. I love being the voice and an advocate for Haiti. When people want to talk about Haiti, I take them on a journey through the mountains to the beaches, the villages and the city. I help them to crave the food, the avocados and the mangos, to daydream about floating in Bassin Bleu, flying a homemade kite that a young child made during March, I point them towards a book filled with Haitian Proverbs, I tell them about the beautiful artisans that create pieces from broken glass and recycled oil drums. I share the resilience of a people and the power of a revolution that was won and made Haiti the first black nation and how this changed the landscape of America. My eyes fill with tears and my heart swells with love every I get a chance to share Haiti with anyone.

I did and will continue to dig deep to find out who and what Haiti really is. When the world was telling ME: I needed to go to Haiti and make a difference, I found out that I needed HAITI to make me different. Merci Anpil AYITI!



Piti piti, zwazo fè nich. Little by little, the bird builds its nest. ■



KING HENRY CHRISTOPHE WEBINAR

On October 17, 2020, HNGD gave a well-deserved nod to Haiti's first monarch with a webinar entitled *The Haitian King: The Life and Time of King Henry Christophe I.*



This two-hour presentation was packed with relevant and new information, even for those who were fortunate to have learned about this great leader during their years of schooling in Haiti. Dr. Marlene Daut, Professor of African Diaspora Studies at the University of Virginia, kept the audience, comprised of over 50 participants, enthralled with the information that she shared about the life story and achievements of the fierce leader. The attendees were not just from Michigan; they signed on from different parts of the US. We even had a participant who joined us from England. They remained engaged and had a plethora of questions that spoke volumes about their interest in the topic.

This was HNGD's first attempt at hosting a virtual event and it was a success. While the program was organized under the aegis of HNGD, the credit belongs to the individuals who lent us their time and talent and worked tirelessly to ensure that everything went well and to the entities who gave us their backing: Dr Jean-Claude Dutès, the mastermind behind the effort to give King Henry Christophe the recognition that he deserves; Ms. Maggy Corkery, our tireless president, who moved the idea from conception to fruition; Professor Alex Vernon, Director of the Immigration Law Clinic at University of Detroit Mercy; Ms. Sue Swift from Southeastern Michigan HIV/AIDS Council; Dr. Victor Figueroa, Acting Director for the Center for Latino/a and Latin American Studies at Wayne State University. HNGD could not have pulled this tour de force without them. We will be forever grateful for this collaborative effort that has helped raise the organization's visibility in Michigan and beyond. ■

PREMYE JANVIE! JOU DLAN ! FÒK NOU FETE INDEPENDANS AYITI AK SOUP JOUMOU!



This Creole phrase should bring back memories of growing up in Haiti, gathering around the dining room table on January 1st after having attended mass and being served a hot bowl of soup joumou to celebrate Haiti's independence. The tradition of having soup joumou on the first day of the new year will be found wherever Haitians are present. This custom of commemorating the birth of the 1st Black Republic in the world with a dish as unique and tasty as soup joumou caught the attention of the New York Times. The HNGD Board was interviewed for an article that came out on December 29, 2020.

HNGD's own celebration of the 2017th year of Haiti's independence took place on January 17. Because of the restrictions around COVID-19, there was no presentation or gathering and the usual fare of soup joumou and pâtés was only available for curbside pick-up. The event was supported by the Bèl Bagay Lakay Haitian Art & Craft Festival and the food was offered free of charge. By the deadline, 100 guests had already reserved their spot. Many had reached out after reading the article in the New York times; they wanted to experience the dish that has such an extraordinary history attached to it.

To avoid long lines, each person was given a time to pick up their food. Needless to say, putting this event together required a lot of coordination from the HNGD Board. Janny took on the task of scheduling the pick-up times, while Shirley and Maggy focused on contacting the volunteers and sending out the notifications. The day before the event, the three of them got together to assemble the pâtés. This seemingly simple task took no less than 6 hours to complete! Our community may be small in number but it's mighty because our people never hesitate to lend a hand when their assistance is required. The volunteer cooks: Adeline Auguste, Jinette Chapman, Jocelyne Charles and Rose Moïse; those who helped

Continued on next page

with the set-up and food distribution: Ché Alcé Jean-Charles, Lise-Pauline Barnett, Carine Hails, Jan Ulric; and last but not least all of you... HNGD members like Eric Guilliod who not only drove from Toledo but braved the elements to take pictures as the guests were pulling up, community members, supporters and all the new friends that we met that day! Without all of us uniting and putting our talents and resources together we could not have done it. Thank you all for this show of support and solidarity. Thank you for helping us start 2021 with a Bang. See you next year at the 2022 Soup Joumou and Pâtés event!

Below, is the link to the New York Times article:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/29/dining/soup-joumou-haitian-independence-day.html?action=click&module=At%20Home&pgtype=Homepage> ■



From Left to right: Carinne Hails, Eric Guilliod and Maggy Corkery

Jan Ulrich and Lise-Pauline Barnett



A happy guest picking-up her order for 3



Kamryn Auguste

Lolo Chue



The tireless Trio: Maggy, Janny and Shirley

HAPPY RETIREMENT PROFESSOR MONTILUS!

On May 15th, 2020, the Department of Anthropology at Wayne State University held a grand celebration car parade for Dr. Guerin Montilus to celebrate his retirement after many decades of service to his students and the community. Over 20 cars decorated with balloons made a great commotion of honking horns as they surprised Dr. Montilus, driving past his front yard where he had been sitting with his family. Following the parade, these colleagues, students, and former students gathered on the lawn to toast Dr. Montilus and speak about all he has done as an educator and scholar. The department gifted him a framed applique map of Africa that was made in Benin to celebrate his work there and add to his art collection. Though it was grey and wet out, it was a joyous afternoon. ■



Prof. Montilus and his well-wishers

IN MEMORIAM



IN MEMORIAM



MARCEL LÉONARD, JR., was born to Marie-Thérèse Léonard and Marcel H. Léonard, Sr. on March 8th, 1966 at St. Joseph Women's Hospital in Manhattan, NY. Shortly after his birth, he was sent to live with his Aunt, Mommy Lucienne in Haiti (which was customarily done in West Indian families). His mother was a nurse, and his father was in school to become an architect, establishing a stable home for the family. Later he reunited with the family, but now had to share them with his fabulously good-looking and talented little sister. Shortly after, the family moved to Detroit, MI in 1970.

Marcel Léonard Jr. (Marco)



At a very young age, Marco demonstrated a talent in Art and Academics. He was a stellar student and was quite gifted at freehand drafting which was evidenced on every piece of paper he could put a pencil to. Everyone who knew him, knew about his love for astronomy and his desire to be an astronaut. He loved to read and had an incredible sense of humor. He was witty and had a comeback for everything. He had a deep passionate love affair with science-fiction. Marco danced to the beat of his own drum, never following norms or rules despite the countless punishments and thrashings he got from his father (you know how West Indian fathers can be). To describe him in one word...well, in all honesty...you can't...not going to happen.

Marco attended high school at Kingsway College in Oshawa, Ontario Canada and Cedar Lake Academy in Lansing, MI. He finished his Senior year at Henry Ford High School in Detroit. Like most young men of a certain age, he was unsure of his path in life and thought it would be a good idea to join the U.S. Marine Corps, where he was given the opportunity to travel across the globe. Upon his return home from the service, he matriculated at Wayne State University, where he majored in Civil Engineering and was finally able to showcase his drafting ability.

Unfortunately, his career was short-lived when he encountered major health problems leading to renal failure. He would spend roughly 18 years as a dialysis patient amongst other disabilities he suffered. It was at this time it could be said that he reached out to EVERY SINGLE

family member on both sides (sometimes daily) or friends or anyone that would listen by phone or in person. His conversations were, how I would describe them, colorful and verbose! Yes, that's a nice way to say it. He was never at a loss for words; good luck trying to get a word in. His conversations were 90% his opinion and 10% his viewpoint and if you did not answer, his voicemail message was 100% of both. But he comes from a family of talkers and he definitely knew how to KEEP IN TOUCH.

His long, hard years of suffered illness finally came to an end in November of 2020.

Marco was preceded in death by his Father Marcel Hercules Léonard, Aunt Francesse Péan, and Uncle Jean-Millery Mauze.

He is survived by his mother Marie-Thérèse Léonard, his sister Mona Lissa Stewart, and brother-in-law Ian Anthony Stewart. Nephews Tevyn Nicolás Stewart and partner Danielle Marie Hilliker, and Christophér Warren Stewart and wife Angelica Monyette Stewart, great-nephew Ashton Drake Stewart, uncle Felix Léonard and aunt Myrna Léonard, aunt Hermine Léonard, uncle Carlvilair Péan, uncle Gerard Mauze, aunt Lucienne Nicolás St-Lot, aunt Janine Mauze, and countless cousins, friends and loved ones.

Mona Léonard Stewart - Sister/Author ■

In Memoriam

Dimitri has been a part of our community for close to 20 years. Whenever HNGD called on him, he was always ready to lend a hand either by hosting a meeting, ordering t-shirts to commemorate the bicentennial of Haiti's independence or most recently by leading our Children's Book Club. Dimitri had great plans in store for the youth of our community, unfortunately he is gone too early, too soon.



DIMITRI DAUPHIN *by Ambikar Harricharam*

Dimitri and I met in Florida where we were introduced by his sister in-law Luidney. Dimitri was selfless; he was the most considerate, caring, understanding and compassionate person I have ever met in my life. His love had no limit when it came to my wellbeing, health and happiness. He always took me for long walks and drives. We frequently went dancing, to the movies and dining out, ensuring that we spent quality time with each other despite our busy schedules. He called me daily to ensure that ate and was okay.

Dimitri was a planner and had enormous potential and countless dreams, some of which he unfortunately did not have the time to achieve. He was a happy and contented person and he made sure that everyone around him experienced

Continued on next page

the same. He always had a positive disposition, nothing or no situation was ever too much for him to deal with. He was a workaholic and took extreme pride in his job.

Dimitri was a provider and a dedicated father to his only son Alain. His son was an integral part of his life and he took his role as a father very seriously. He guided Alain to be a good person and always endeavored to ensure that he was happy and loved. It was important to him that they spend quality time together and he introduced Alain to many activities such as sports and music.

Dimitri filled my heart with so much love in the short time that he spent with me. I am so grateful that I was able to be a part of his life and create so many wonderful memories which I will hold dear to my heart.

My life is better having known Dimitri. My heart is broken into a million of pieces. The day he left this world he took a part of me with him and I don't know if I will ever be able to pick up the broken pieces and move on again. His life was abruptly cut short, leaving me floundering; without him, my compass is lost. I will always love you cheri.... Rest in peace my true love! ■



Alain, Dimitri and Ambi



Dimitri leading the Children Book Club – 2016



FRANTZ T. MORISSEAU



January 7, 1948 to February 5, 2020

HNGD, in deep sympathy with the family of Frantz T. Morisseau, presents an abbreviated version of his eulogy in acknowledgement and memory of his passing. Though he did not serve in any official capacity, he could always be counted upon to attend and support HNGD's efforts by his presence and words of encouragement.

In his adolescence, Frantz moved to Detroit, Michigan to live with his mother and father, along with his brother Eddy, and his younger sister Paule. Frantz became a child of St. Timothy's Episcopal Church where his father was the rector. In his adulthood, Frantz would go on to become a faithful servant of St. Tim's, being a member of the St. Theresa De Avila Guild as the only man in the all-women guild in honor of his sister Paule Ghislaine, whose place he took after her passing.

Frantz was a Trustee of the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan, Delegate to the Detroit Deanery – never missing one monthly meeting, and Treasurer of the Mason Chapter of the Union of Black Episcopalians. Frantz held the positions of Treasurer and Secretary of the Vestry, President of the Men's Club, and was an active participant in the weekly Bible study at St. Tim's and subsequently at All Saints Episcopal Church. When his sight began to decline, Frantz could no longer read but remained in the group to be a "Bible commentator." He was especially known for his pot of Haitian red beans and rice with sauce (*pwa*) that he brought to EVERY occasion.

A graduate of Cooley High and Wayne State University, Frantz T. held many positions in his life, including working for the City of Detroit for Traffic Court, being a Supervisor for Manpower, and finally as an Information Analyst with AT&T before surviving a debilitating stroke at the age of 35 years old. He went on to have his son at the age of 38. He refused to let something like a disability slow him down or stop his progress, and it was important for him to teach his children perseverance in the face of struggle. With this mentality, Frantz did many active things not expected of a paralyzed man.

Continued on next page

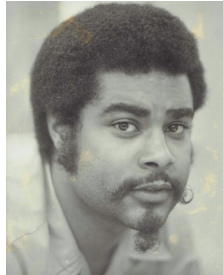


Frantz not only lived a full and thorough life for himself, but he also helped to mentor many others. He was a father figure for many young boys in the neighborhood who lacked parental figures in their lives, for other daughters in the family that were not his own, and for friends of his children. He even helped to father an orphan in Haiti who eventually took Frantz' last name in solidarity.

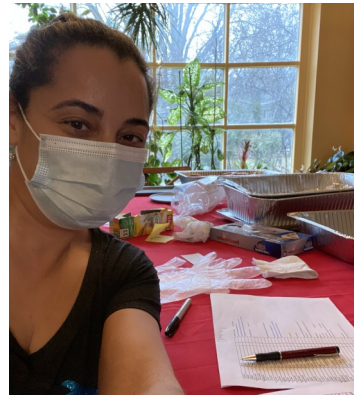
One of Frantz T's most important acts of service in his life was Haiti Outreach Mission. Started by longtime friends of his family, Dominique Monde Matthews and Roger Matthews, Frantz took many trips back to Mirebalais, Haiti, in order to serve the most vulnerable and poor in the country with health clinics and medical care. Frantz would serve as an aide and a translator.

In the wake of Frantz T's transitioning, he is leaving behind a mighty footprint that can never be filled. He is survived by his wife, Linda Morisseau, his son Frantz Paul Ryan Morisseau, his daughter Dominique Morisseau Keys, and his two grandsons, Frantz Paul Ryan Morisseau II and Xavier Seka-Amani Morisseau. He is also survived by his mother, Edith Morisseau. His brother Eddy Dumont Morisseau. His cousin-sister Janny Magloire Milton. And a host of family and friends.

If you knew Frantz and/or are inspired by his life and legacy, please not only support his beloved Haiti Outreach Mission, but also find your own causes to support that can help create balance and justice for all people in this world. Thank you! ■



MORE PICTURES OF SOUP JOUMOU EVENT!



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. ■

LE CAUCHEMAR

Reynald Altéma, MD



Ce soir-là, Roberta ne pouvait plus dormir une fois réveillée au milieu d'un cauchemar et trempée de sueurs, palpitante, apeurée, nerveuse, agacée. Ce cauchemar venait de confirmer ce que son sixième sens doutait : sa fille unique, Sandra, dite Sansann, traversait un calvaire de proportion de tragédie qui engloberait toute la famille. En effet de très tôt Roberta avait détecté un problème qui rongait Sansann. Depuis tantôt une semaine, elle n'était plus la même personne, une métamorphose ahurissante dans sa dimension, son arrivée soudaine et pire par son existence.

Sous l'emprise de l'insomnie, elle repassait les événements précédents. Le premier indice fut le refus de Sansann de prendre son petit déjeuner le lundi matin. Ce simple acte fut remarquable pour sa rareté, car elle ne le ferait que si elle avait une angine accompagnée d'une fièvre. Roberta avait touché son front et la température était normale ; de plus elle ne prétendait pas d'être malade. Elle n'avait pas un intérêt dans la nourriture. Plus tard pour le dîner, au lieu de son appétit du pauvre notoire, elle démontrait celui d'un oiseau, car elle y avait à peine goûté, incluant son dessert préféré, une confiture de chadèques. Le jour suivant, Sansann n'avait pas rejoint ses amies pour leur session de maquillage. D'habitude, elle serait la première à les inviter à se coiffer l'une l'autre, et surtout chanter à tue-tête. Sansann avait choisi la solitude, loin de ses camarades. Elle restait dans sa chambre et en silence, une bizarrerie pour celle qui chantait toujours d'une voix perçante, même seule. Ce silence sépulcral résonnait dans son cœur maternel inquiet comme un mauvais augure, comme le glas.

Ce lundi-là, au crépuscule, Roberta sur la pointe des pieds, avait entre-ouvert la porte de la chambre et Sansann dormait. Roberta avait fait ce geste à plusieurs reprises mais la scène restait la même, Sansann restait dans un profond sommeil. Elle n'avait pas fait ses devoirs d'école. Ce modèle se répètera pour le reste de la semaine.

Ce changement de Sansann, cette jolie fille de treize ans, n'était pas passé inaperçu chez ses amies et condisciples de classe, elle avait appris. Toutes avaient observé que son humeur passa de gaie à maussade, d'une élève brillante en tête de classe à une étudiante désintéressée. Écouter les hits à la radio ensemble sans sa voix secondant celle du chanteur, difficile à imaginer, impossible à vivre. Sa participation en classe avait pris un tour de 180 degrés, aussi personne ne pouvait bénéficier de ses interventions intelligentes, une observation douloureuse. Son absence pesait lourd et partageait l'aspect insolite d'une aurore sans rayons de soleil ou d'une soirée sans lune.

Roberta, réveillée au cours de cette nuit blanche, pensait à un tas de possibilités pour expliquer le changement de comportement de Sansann. En écoutant les nouvelles à la radio le jour précédent, il y avait un segment sur l'inceste et les symptômes lui paraissaient similaires à ceux qu'elle observait chez elle. Cette possibilité était devenue une hantise. Elle voulait en avoir la certitude avant d'en parler, d'en discuter à son mari qui est si jaloux et si protecteur. Cette perspective avait ouvert la porte d'un cauchemar permanent. Le pire, se disait-elle, ce serait de démasquer le bourreau de son enfant, ce parent pervers et incestueux. Son tourment ne cessera qu'une fois qu'elle en aura le cœur net, une fois que la vérité sera établie et pour cela elle sera prête à tout, à remuer ciel et terre.

Elle se rappela qu'au début de cette crise, car Roberta la guettait souvent, elle croyait à une simple mélancolie passagère d'une jeune adolescente qui venait juste de passer le cap de transition féminine physiologique. Puberté ou non, cependant la durée et l'ampleur de ce changement l'inquiétèrent de plus en plus. C'était ainsi que le jour suivant, un samedi matin, ne pouvant plus retenir son inquiétude, « Qu'est-ce qui ne va pas, chérie ? » demanda-t-elle. En guise de réponse, Sansann tourna le dos et se rua vers sa chambre, les larmes aux yeux. La vue de ces larmes la mettait en proie à une angoisse aiguë similaire à une plaie vive creusée par une lame bien affûtée. Les an-

Continued on next page



tennes de son intuition de mère s'érigèrent. Roberta ouvrit sa porte et fut accablée de voir sa fille recroquevillée sur son lit, pleurant inlassablement. « Sansann chérie, dis-moi ce qui t'ennuie ! » Le cœur déchiré, elle l'enveloppa avec ses bras et les deux restèrent en silence quelques instants. « Quelqu'un t'a fait du mal, une amie, un garçon, un homme ? », insista-t-elle. Sansann se secoua la tête pour indiquer la négative. « À quelle partie de la question dis-tu non ? Au fait ou à la personne ? » Pas de réponse. Elle ne pouvait pas répondre, car elle se sentait mal à l'aise pour dire la vérité.

Sansann ne pensait pas que sa mère la croirait, car dans son esprit naïf, le mal en question, si abominable, est inimaginable. Le fautif par contre fut si proche, un parent adulte et perfide. Le dilemme pour elle c'était la rupture de la confiance placée en lui en toute innocence. La notion du respect d'un aîné, spécialement un proche parent était remise en question. Ce renversement de l'ordre des choses surpassait sa capacité mentale de jeune adolescente. Elle avait honte de révéler ce mal, elle avait peur des conséquences d'un tel aveu, mais ne pouvait supporter l'idée de rester muette, permettant sa continuité. C'était la pire épreuve de sa jeune existence.

Cette épreuve avait débuté de la façon la plus anodine. Elle insista à prendre des leçons de danse de son oncle, depuis tantôt quelques semaines, car c'était la nouvelle vague parmi ses amies. Il était le frère benjamin de sa mère et il venait passer le week-end de temps à autre. Sansann l'aimait beaucoup parce qu'il l'avait toujours gâtée. Il la comblait de friandises lorsqu'elle était petite. En présence des autres, il agissait normalement, mais lorsqu'ils étaient seuls, il se permettait la liberté d'effleurer ses seins ou de la serrer un peu fort pendant les leçons de danse, et ceci d'une façon plus effrontée. Allant de mal en pis, il a essayé la dernière fois de passer la main sur son bas-ventre en faisant des remarques sur sa poitrine, sa croupe et même offrir un baiser. Il s'est arrêté lorsqu'elle a poussé un cri. Ce cri de désespoir, de choc l'a laissée stupéfaite, déprimée et en guerre avec elle-même, se demandant si elle n'avait pas sa part de culpabilité. Cela l'a emmenée dans les ténèbres, une prison où la douleur émotionnelle ne connaît pas de fin, ou la notion de clarté était absente et remplacée en succession par la pénombre et son jumeau le clair-obscur ou leur cousine, la noirceur complète. Dans ce monde, la joie, l'amusement, l'estime, l'amour-propre ne sont que des fantômes sans aucun sens réel dans le présent. Ce monde était nourri par les pleurs à chaudes larmes dans le quotidien, la haine du mâle, le repli sur soi, le dégoût d'interactions humaines, la définition du néant, quand, même le sel, avait un goût insipide.

Déboussolée, Sansann ne voulait que dormir, oublier le présent, ce qu'elle fit assez vite. Sa mère la quitta, le cœur broyé, devinant que sa fille passait une crise existentielle. Son émoi fut amplifié par son incapacité de venir en aide à son beau brin de fille, son adorée. Le père de Sansann n'eut pas de meilleur succès en essayant de lui parler.

Ce soir-là Sansann poussa un cri en plein sommeil.

Surpris, ses parents arrivèrent à sa chambre. « Mon oncle Pierrot, lâches-moi, tu me serres trop, ne me touches pas ainsi ! » elle hurla. Alors, tout parut clair, sale, nauséeux, scandaleux. « Je vais tuer ce salaud, cette fieffée canaille ! » cria le père. Paralysée, Roberta est restée sans mot. Elle était tombée des nues, car elle avait porté son frère, son filleul, aux nues, le dernier-né de la famille.

Ce coup de massue fut rude, comme une main prise au sein d'un nid de guêpes et sortant boursofflée avec des dardes pénibles. Sansann fut surprise d'apprendre qu'elle avait fait une telle déclaration pendant son sommeil. Dans une effusion de larmes, elle décrivit la mésaventure, soulagée, d'une part, mais aussi bien confuse, aigrie, toujours traumatisée, méfiante. Roberta était mise en face à un cauchemar sans nom, son pire tourment, ayant un nœud dans la gorge, en présence d'un choix cornélien aussi bien que draconien. Le père ne vit qu'une seule issue, une raclée pour sauver son honneur et celui de sa princesse. Sansann avait le plus de mal que possible à comprendre que son oncle aurait une attraction physique envers elle et même prêt à faire le *kadèjak* sur elle, sa nièce qui l'adorait. Cette réalité était cynique, inique, percutante, l'épure d'une conception brutale et d'une mentalité méchante, une notion scabreuse et grossière, une obscénité cauchemardesque. Ce fut une rude introduction à une loi impitoyable, la défiance remplissant le vide bêché par la perte de confiance.

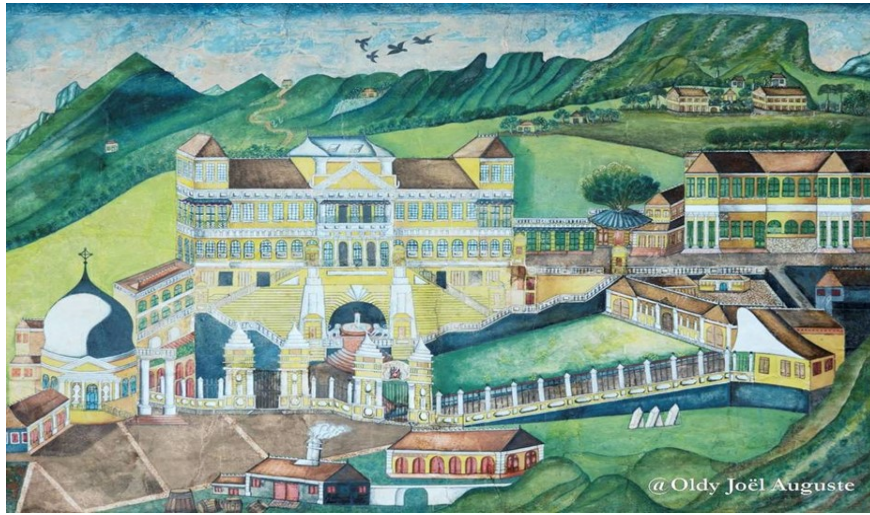
Pierrot, à son domicile, fut confronté par le père de Sansann, qui était venu avec un *kokomakak* pour régler les comptes, prêt à le rosser, avait pris la poudre d'escampette après le premier coup délivré. Il ne revint jamais à la maison de Sansann. C'était la partie simple. Sansann traumatisée a dû suivre des sessions de thérapie psychique, mais dépitée, avait des cauchemars récurrents. Elle a pris du temps à guérir, ou plutôt à cicatriser la plaie. Le prix de sa « cicatrisation » fut la perte de la naïveté, l'acquisition d'une maturité mentale précoce.

Aucun mot n'a fuité de cet incident. Roberta s'efforça à étouffer le problème dans l'œuf. Le sujet de dépression ne fut jamais discuté avec les amis. La disparition du frère de la maison ne fut jamais expliquée. Sansann n'avait pas droit d'en parler avec ses amies. Le « quand-dira-t-on » était une inquiétude majeure, une considération à ne jamais ignorer dans notre milieu. ■



“AUNT JULIE'S TEARS”

By Jean-Claude Dutès, Ph.D.



PALAIS SANS - SOUCI



At the end of a 13-year struggle, a small nation, built by men, women, and boys, who preferred to die than forsake their dignity, emerged against all expectations on the world scene. “Liberty or death” was not just a statement, it was a rallying cry, a reality, and a deed.

This newborn nation represented a threat to the economic world order so dependent on slavery to survive. Against all odds this brave nation survived, battered, wounded but breathing till today. For how long, no one knows, but what we do know is that it was not always like that.

Looking at history, many would say nothing has changed, maybe some short periods of normalcy interspersed with bouts of convulsions. Others would claim that only a fraction of what was is still in existence, and more would affirm that it was condemned to be what it is today because it was a country born out of slavery, built by slaves and led by slaves.

A small child who was sitting a few feet from the people engaged in a discussion, shouted: “what about the kingdom of Ayiti?” “Well,” said an older looking man, certainly in his sixties, “what about it?”

“I heard that it was...,” the child started to say, then stumbled on his words as if searching for a word or a memory that has not yet crystallized, “a place where King Henry lived, the place where there is that big thing called the citadel.”

“What a pity!” said a woman, younger in appearance than the man, but clearly comfortably in her late forties, “of all that was there, that is the only thing that grabs the imagination... What a country!”

“King Henry was a cruel man,” said the man tersely, as an explanation for ending the exchange.

“Didn’t he work at the citadel too when they were building it, like any other laborers?”

“Yes,” responded the man, but he was very cruel, he said emphatically.

“Didn’t he build a bunch of other castles and big buildings all over the kingdom” said the boy in an insistent tone.

“Yes,” the man retorted, “but he was a very mean man.”

In frustration, the boy asked, “was he fair?”

The man thought for a second, as if appearing to take the conversation seriously and changing tone, taking a more patient approach, finally said, “He did not tolerate corruption, laziness or idleness, but he was very cruel.”

The boy listened but seemed intent on pursuing his inquiry. “But auntie Marie Rose told me that he had a court where the people dressed in their best clothes and had great dinner parties.” She said, ‘she wished she were alive then, and that she would have been ‘une grande dame.’”

Patience, the man said “yes, he liked nice things and made sure that the roads were clean and well maintained, but he was kind of extravagant and ostentatious.”

The boy looked quizzically and asked, “what does ostentatious mean, that is a new word?” The man replied, “it means that he was showy or flashy, overdoing things doing more than is necessary.”

The boy just moved on. “You know what aunt Marie Rose said. She told me that in his kingdom, the people made their own

Continued on next page



clothing and Uncle Toto said the army made their own munitions. Uncle Eric can you tell me what munitions are ?”

Another man who was just listening to the exchange between the two said “it is what the soldiers used to fight with, you know their weapons, like shotguns, cannon balls gun powder, and bullets to fight the French in case they returned to try to make us slaves again.” How did you know all this?” Uncle Jean said with taint of pride in his voice.

The boy, flushed with excitement, did not seem to hear the question but blurted out, “my teacher, Mrs. Claude told us that the kingdom had many schools for little boys and girls like me and that he liked smart boys and girls who listened to their parents and teachers.”

Both men motioned their heads up and down in agreement. But the first man interjected with gentle obsessiveness “but he was mean and cruel.”

“You are mean to me sometimes, like when I don’t want to do my homework, like when you whipped me with the “rigwas”. Was he mean like that?”

“Maybe,” said the man, “many of the people in his kingdom did not want to work as hard as he wanted them too, he was always in hurry, saying ‘there is so much to do and so little time in which to do it.’

The boy, with eagerness in his voice and a clever look in his eyes said, “you mean like when you tell me I should not play so much, and I should be reading or studying and I want to have fun with my friends.” The man, somewhat feeling trapped sheepishly replied ‘something like that, but I do it for your own good... ‘qui aime bien châtie bien.’

“Ah,” said the boy victoriously, he must have loved his subjects so much that he did not want them to be lazy, so when they grow up they can become big important people like you always tell when you accuse me of being difficult.”

The man said, “yes and no... it’s complicated, you don’t understand... adults are not like children, they can make their own mind, they don’t like other people telling them what to do, but it is my job to guide you.”

“Oh”, said the boy, like that time you told grand papa Montasse that you are not a child anymore and to stay out of your business.” So, when I grow up, I can do what I want and when I want.”

The man with exasperated resignation in his voice said, “yes, but within reason.”

The boy said nothing for a while, and just as the man was about to walk away, he said, “Mrs. Joseph told Yoly and I that the king was a man of vision who wanted Ayiti to be like any other kingdom. She said he wanted to show and make Black people believe they too could do great things, like their ancestors in Africa. She said that he did not want us to stay behind the other countries. She said he worked so hard keeping us motivated that he worked himself to death.”

The boy with a distressing tone in his voice and a sad look on his face said, “the people must have been cruel to let him work himself to death.” “Is it true that he was very rich?”

Before anybody could answer, Yoly who had been listening a few feet away jumped and said, with her eyes wide open and her arms extended into an arc said “ she told us that he

left a lot, lot, lot of money in the treasury and Uncle Eric told me that he was an honest man who made his own money and did not take any from the government like they are doing now.”

Now that the boy sensing some competition, jumped in quickly before Yoly could say another word, to declare in a spectacular fashion “Auntie Julie said after his death, the other president took all of the money and send it south and you know what he did: he closed all of the schools so the little boys and girls could never become big men and women anymore when they grow up. She said they stole the money and kept us in ignorance.”

Yoly, seizing the moment again, butted in quickly said, “she became angry and was very mad at that president... remember Jean-Jean how she spit on the floor shouting “talking about cruelty... the real cruelty is to rob children of an education.” She said that is why we are so poor right now and get no respect from the other countries, even those which we helped free.”

A passerby, a man who is an acquaintance of Julie said loudly “depi ou mouri avan, ou antò.” Turning toward the man’s direction, Julie gave him a hostile look that made him quickly take a more serious tone and blurted out the name “Shakespeare” while holding both hands up, as if to excuse himself and appease Julie. Remember Julius Caesar, he said, “remember Mark Anthony...the evil that men do live after them and the good is oft interred with their bone.” Julie said nothing but the tension in her face and body slowly dissipated leaving a calm, somber and reflective mood in her gaze as she looked into the horizon.

There was a short silence, then the girl spoke first while trying to find Aunt Julie’s eyes, from which two small streams of water ran down her cheeks.

Calmly, Yoly asked “is that why Papa kept saying he was cruel?”

“Auntie Julie, can you be both good and bad?” Jean-Jean pondered out loud, pensively. ■



Jacques-Victor, Anne-Athénaïre and Françoise-Améthyste, children of King Henry Christophe