

L'OUVERTURE

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A FEW WORDS FROM OUR EDITOR

Hello and welcome back! 2020 has seamlessly merged into 2021, bringing with it the chaos, confusion, and helplessness that COVID-19 and its mismanagement have brought to this country. A silver lining, a ray of hope may have been sighted in the horizon, however. Elections were held and there has been a transition to an administration that offers a more sanguine, disciplined, and competent approach to the management of this pandemic. We hope that it will be able to translate its aspirations into reality for the sake of the country and our own. We wish the Biden-Harris administration much luck and persistent courage in its effort, likely to be Herculean, to redress the national vessel towards less tumultuous waters. To paraphrase poet Amanda Gorman, with intense fervor, we hope to march forward to what shall be, and not what was.



At our other home, the situation is no less dire. Some, however, would contend that it is far worse, with a future smeared by uncertainty and no silver lining on the horizon. Yet, Haiti keeps entertaining visitors and has been much less affected by the pandemic than expected, compared to other more fortunate nations. Despite Haiti's recent reported reputation for lawlessness and rampant crimes, LCS was able, with mild difficulties due to the ineptitude of its telephone carriers, to organize a webinar that was moderated from Aux Cayes, Haïti. This makes me think that Haiti is probably never as bad as some think, nor as good as we like to imagine it.

On this end, we will keep doing our share, spreading the history of that beautiful land and of its courageous people hoping to foster links to strengthen our attachment to it, and lending a hand where needed and whenever we can be of assistance. I hope that we keep endeavoring to find the language of true unity, brotherhood, and progress once more! As the young poet said, "if we could merge mercy with might, and might with right, then love becomes our legacy in change, our children's birthright."

In this issue, our third one, our Chairperson presents an encouraging "state of the society report," summarizing where we were, where we are and where we are going. Next, we give you the opportunity to relive the Soup Joumou webinar and partake in the feast of knowledge that it turned out to be. In a moving piece, Dr. Reynal Altéma ponders on the day of infamy that was January 6, 2021 and reviews the history of the use of instrumental violence in thwarting the democratic will and voice of African Americans. With a focus on the progressive side of America and Haitian cultural resilience, Ms. Jocelyn Comeau introduces us to Ms. Karine Jean-Pierre, the Deputy Press secretary for the Biden-Harris administration. Dr. Altéma returns to delight us with a hopeful story about love and our ability to reach out and connect with others despite personal differences. Shifting to the issue of personal agency, I write on the importance of personal missions and share some ideas on how to maintain and retake control of our lives. Finally, to make sure you do not miss out, look at the listing of upcoming events.

Happy New Year and happy reading!

Jean-Claude Dutès, Ph.D.
Editor



GREETINGS FROM OUR CHAIRPERSON, MIKE MOISE

Dear Members and Friends,

As the Chairperson of LCS, I am truly honored to work with the exceptional talent on our Board. On behalf of the entire Board of Directors of the L'Ouverture Cultural Society, Inc. (LCS), I want to wish each of you and yours a Happy New Year and continued success in 2021. In 2020, we confronted the global coronavirus (COVID-19) and there is no question that now more than ever we live in a continuously changing world, and for us to be successful, we need to adapt to it.

I would like to take just a few minutes of your time to share some of our organization's accomplishments and where we are headed. Although LCS was only founded in May of 2020, we are thrilled to inform you that we have been approved and designated by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) as a tax-exempt 501©3 nonprofit public charitable organization.



To date, LCS has successfully published three Newsletters that have proven to be a valuable platform for sharing information. The feedback from our members has been incredibly positive as they have found the articles to be enjoyable and informative. With this in mind, I invite you to look carefully at our Newsletter and would welcome suggestions about topics of interest to you. Our editor would like you to take an active part in shaping each issue by submitting articles or advising us of any personal or professional achievements that you would like to share with our readership.

LCS has also organized three webinar events: October 24th, 2020: King Henry I of Haiti Bicentennial commemoration; November 18th, 2020: Reflections on the Battle of Vertieres; and January 1st, 2021: an interactive conversation about Haiti's Soup Joumou. By all accounts, they were a first-rate success. The attendance at each of the events more than met our expectations. The feedback from participants revealed that both members and non-members alike greatly appreciated the webinars. Certainly, none of these accomplishments would have been possible without the kindness and generosity of our members, who have donated their resources.

Once again, on behalf of the entire Board of Directors, we want to thank our members for their generous financial support and for joining our society. As promised, the Board and I are committed to continue bringing strong, thoughtful programming to your attention. In keeping with this objective, please take a look at our schedule of upcoming events for 2021.

In closing, your everyday contacts and networks are great new membership sources for LCS. I know many more members of our community would benefit greatly from the programs of our organization. Please tell your friends, co-workers, and acquaintances about us, and encourage them to become a member. Last but not least, share this newsletter with everyone you know.

Stay safe and be safe!

Warmest Regards,

Mike Moise
Chairperson

Soup Joumou Webinar: A Recap



By Cosy Joseph, MS

On January 2, 2021, Fête des Aïeux, our beloved Soup Joumou became part of Haiti's cultural patrimony. What a revel! What a delightful milestone for our oh-so-delicious Soup Joumou!

A day before that major announcement, on January 1, 2021, LCS held its first annual Soup Joumou webinar. The event was live from Haiti, and hosted by Cosy Joseph, an Information Technology expert and "Soup Joumou Chef," and Dr. Marie Morel, a High-Risk OB/GYN Specialist and a fervent lover of Cosy's delicious Soup Joumou. Also present was special guest Mr. Jean Dugé, professor, poet, and writer who lives in Les Cayes, Haiti.

of dignity and freedom.

On January 1, 1804, Haiti declared its independence as the first free black nation in the world. On that day, Empress Claire Heureuse Felicite Bonheur Dessalines, a compassionate and caring woman who had been researching the virtues of Joumou and its effectiveness with tuberculosis patients, wanted to find a meal that would help keep the newly freed slaves from starving. Knowing the virtues of Soup Joumou and the importance of the day's celebration, the empress mobilized the women to prepare Soup Joumou to feed the newly freed population, thus starting the tradition of preparing and consuming Soup Joumou on Independence Day, January 1, of each year.



Dr. Marie Ignace G. Morel

History has it that even after the death of her husband, Emperor Jean-Jacques Dessalines, she continued with the tradition of distributing Soup Joumou across the country. Soup Joumou became not only a symbol of freedom and dignity but also of solidarity.

Thinking that you would be curious to know the ingredients in the original Soup Joumou, we gladly decided to share them with you. They were squash, carrots, cabbage, potatoes, yams, turnips, and chayote. Surprise: as you can see, the original soup Joumou did not originally include meat or pasta!

At this lively webinar, we learned about the history and the power of Soup Joumou. Everyone was invited to come and bring their first, second, or third bowl of soup for a casual conversation about its history and significance. Many see more in the soup than just a delicious meal; it is also seen as a symbol



Ms. Cosy Joseph

The Soup Joumou Webinar was designed as an interactive conversation about the soup, and the richness of the conversation exceeded all expectations. With a captive audience, Jean, Marie, and Cosy explored the history of the soup. This led to an enlightening conversation about Mrs. Marie-Claire Heureuse Félicité Bonheur Dessalines.

Continued on the following page>>>>



During our webinar, we also learned about the medicinal and nutritional value of Soup Joumou. According to Historian Bay-yinah Bello, Marie Claire Heureuse Félicité Bonheur Dessalines, in one of her writings, related that she first used the Joumou to treat tuberculosis patients. It was after discovering the virtue of this plant that she decided to popularize the recipe.



Prof. Jean Dugué and Ms. Cosy Joseph

For Marie Claire Heureuse Félicité Bonheur, this dish, once consumed, should allow people to resist hunger for at least two weeks. Now we understand why many Haitian households only cook Soup Joumou on Sunday. We also understand why after one or two bowls of Soup Joumou, we are barely ever hungry.

The webinar also helped us learn a lot about the heroes and heroines of the Haitian revolution.



Ms. Magali Gattereau Duvivier, one of the trivia winners, and Ms. Joseph

Just for the fun of it, we invited the audience to test their knowledge of Haitian history throughout the event and were pleased to see so many winners! LCS emailed \$25 e-gift cards to the laureates.

The following are the trivia questions; see how many correct answers you know!



Trivia questions:

1. Who proclaimed Haiti's independence on January 1st, 1804? **General Jean Jacques Dessalines**
2. Who was the first Empress of Haiti? **Claire Hereuse Félicite Bonheur Dessalines**
3. Who were Haiti's Heroes of Independence (1802–1804)? **Toussaint Louverture, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, Henri Christophe, Alexandre Pétion, and François Capois.**
4. What is the timeframe of the Haitian revolution? **1791 - 1804**
5. Where did Generals Geffrard and Dessalines meet to give birth to the Independence of Haiti? **Camp Gerard**
6. Who was Marie-Jeanne Lamartinière? **Lamartinière is one of the few known Haitian women to serve in the army during the Haitian Revolution. Dressed in a male uniform, she fought alongside her husband, displaying her skill with both rifle and sword during the Battle of Crête-à-Pierrot.**

When not fighting from the ramparts with admirable courage, she would spend her time nursing the injured soldiers around her. She was known for her ability to make swift decisions in the face of hard situations, a quality that made her a valuable comrade in battle.



Artist: Ulrick Jean-Pierre; source: kentakepage.com

7. Who was the woman soldier who eventually became a lieutenant and a prisoner of war executed by the French as a part of the revolution? **Suzanne Béliar**

Another female soldier during the Haitian Revolution was Suzanne Béliar, also known as Sanite Belair. After enrolling in the revolutionary army, she became a lieutenant and fought valiantly throughout the revolution. In an attack on Corail-Mirrault, she became a prisoner of war after she and her husband, general Charles Belair, turned themselves over at the same time to avoid being separated. Sentenced to death, they were both executed. In another version of the story, she was captured first. Upon hearing the news, her husband, who wanted to be with her, decided to surrender to the French forces. Her bravery in the face of execution is applauded throughout Haiti's history.

8. Who sewed the first Haitian flag in 1803? **Catherine Flon**

CONGRATULATIONS to all the winners below!

BRAVO!!!

**Pharah Latour , Yoly Bazile, Arnode Thelemaque,
Dr. Yaa Elombe, Magalie Gattereau Duvivier**

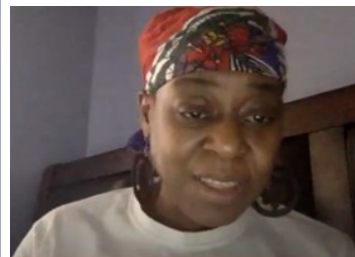


Ms. Jocelyne Comeau,
LCS Board Member

Overall, a fun, engaging, inspirational, informative, and insightful webinar.

We had fun putting this webinar together and were really inspired by the genuine interest and engagement of the participants.

To our delight, LCS has since received many requests to organize an Annual International Soup Joumou Celebration.



Left: Dr. Yaa Elombe,
another winner

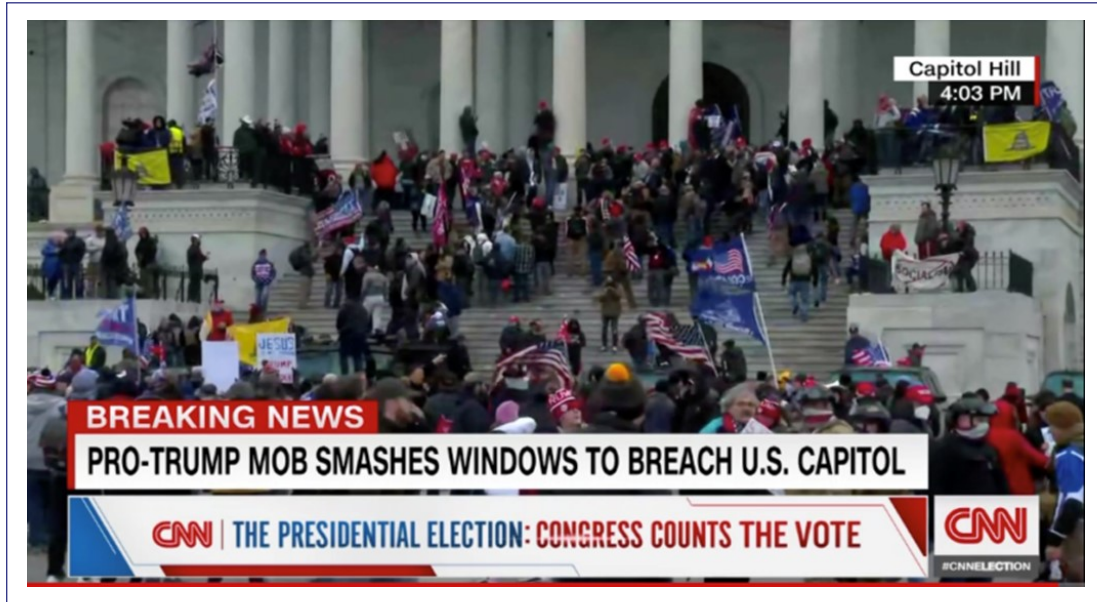


Right: Dr. Nahomie Mirville

Save the date and time: January 1, 2022, 3:00 PM, and plan on coming and bringing your first, second, or third bowl of Soup Joumou for a conversation about how we can use the Soup Joumou tradition to unify Haitians across the globe to come together as one people for the advancement of our beloved Ayiti.

If you missed this encounter, don't you worry! You can still access the Soup Joumou webinar on YouTube [here](#) from LCS' website.



January 6, 2021, Day of Infamy

By Reynald Altéma, MD.

Years from now, we will remember this day with as much revulsion as we do now. We will remember to the minute where we were and what we were doing when we first learned of the news and then became glued to the TV watching a mob of zealots. They were oversold on the lie that an election was rigged and their rights infringed upon. They were egged on by the liar-in-chief who can't stand the status of a loser since his supercharged ego wouldn't allow it.

A mob of white fanatics assaulting a government office is nothing new in the history of this republic. What's new is the widespread dissemination in real time of skullduggery, American style, for the whole world to see. It also provided a stark contrast of a security force, at the very minimum, politely treating the thugs emboldened on the spot by this tacit approval and, at times as shown in videos, aided and abetted. When the participants are of a different hue, or a different political bent, the response is the exact opposite, no matter the validity of the cause. The security force, always present en masse, uses a low threshold to initiate violence and arrest the innocents. None of that was to be seen on that Wednesday.

Decent humans were appalled by such a scene. Objective observers were left to ask, "how come?" As if the horror show were not enough, the grotesque scenario of sycophants and apologists of the right-wing media was quick to try to convince us that we were victims of an optical illusion: the mob was not a pro-Trump band of thugs, but an infiltration of left-leaning anarchists. This flies in the face of the fact that many of the participants were taking selfies, streaming their action on social media, and were very clear about who they were, whom they were supporting, and the cause they were holding dear to their heart.

What about the historical perspective? Many years from now,

long after the dust has settled, historians will shake their heads and wonder about this process of daily assault against democracy. It very likely will be strange to fathom that a leader used his pulpit not for healing but as cudgel to sow conspiracy news and division, four years running. He will be a case study as a demagogue promoting a personality cult, with basic instincts as low as a deep crater. We only need to remember that "Plus ça change, plus ça reste le même."

The overarching charge underlying the angst against the result of the election was filled with racial undertone: the refusal to accept the right of vote, to respect the choice of enfranchised minorities when it runs afoul of the status quo. This is white mob violence redux. Lest we forget, we need to go back to history to learn the lesson that a certain sector of the populace feels extremely uncomfortable with the notion that it has to share political power and national wealth with heretofore disenfranchised members of society.

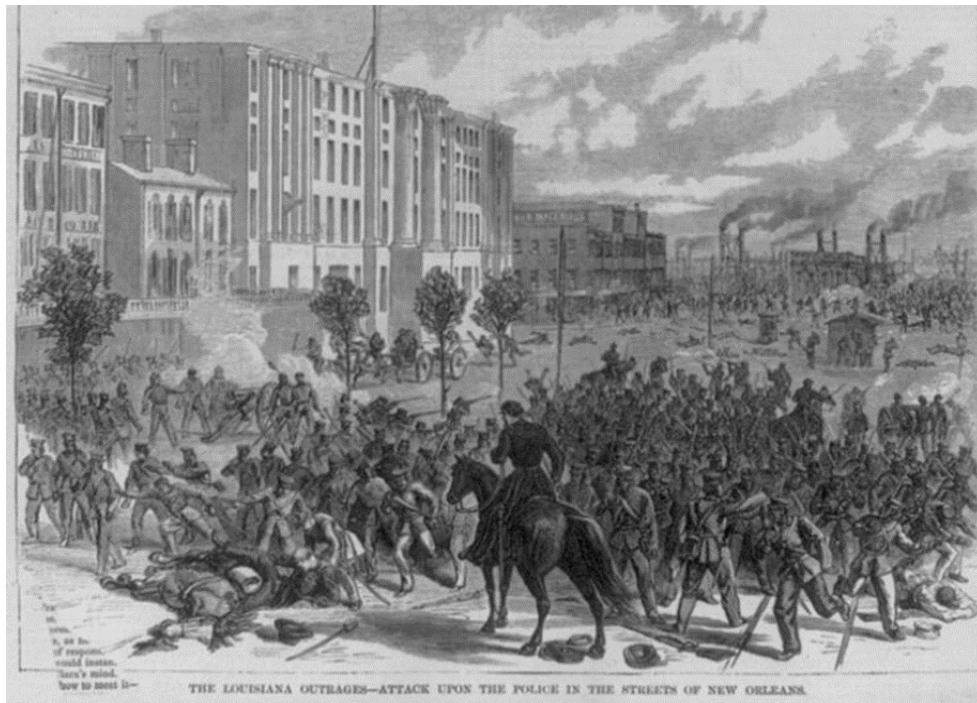
That segment of the populace is ready to go to extremes to protect its *perceived* loss of privileges. I emphasize the word perceived because the facts are the opposite; greater participation by all members of society results in an overall benefit by and for all members. It just so happens that racial animus can blind to such an extent that it prevents rational reaction, reasoning, and lends itself to group think, and persuasion of ever-present conspiracy against its interests.

The fact that a white mob can do damage to property and cause loss of lives with impunity is well chronicled. Two events that mimicked January 6th and provide some serious insight into the mindset of decision makers insofar as crime and punishment, occurred in 1874 and 1876, as Jamelle Bouie from the New York Times (1-8-21) reminds us .



Both times, a white mob stormed a State Capitol as a reaction to an election result not to its liking because it entailed black folks who were until very

recently holders of the very low status known as sub-humans, like... slaves.



The "Louisiana Outrages", as illustrated in Harper's Weekly, 1874 / Wikimedia Commons

In 1874 in New Orleans, a group called White League held hostage both City Hall and the Capitol because they wanted to depose Governor Kellogg and replace him with his opponent from the previous election that took place in 1872. In those days Republicans and Democrats had the reverse order of social commitment from today. That would have worked had it not been for President Ulysses Grant who sent federal troops to restore order. However, the perpetrators received no punishment. That sent a signal that seizing government property by force would not be considered a crime. Hence, in 1876, after an election in Louisiana, the same members of the White League again seized the same offices and installed manu militari Francis Nicholls as Democratic Governor. He saw to it that Reconstruction ended in his state. That method was duplicated in many other states to stem the participation of the freed slaves in the voting process, to begin the installation of Jim Crow laws and all of their aftermath.

The trouble that started outside the Capitol by lunatics found kindred spirits inside the chambers of Congress in two ambitious senators with impeccable pedigree each, having graduated at the top of their classes in Ivy League schools. Their political ambition and choice of scorched-earth policy to please a very conservative base hoodwinks our sense of decency, obliterates truth, and lionizes mendacity. In the end, it

reeks of a toxic notion of patriotism, in an exercise oblivious to its egregious assault on our intelligence.

Fools come in all flavors and some of them are well educated, at least on paper. This brazen activity needs to be stopped in its tracks. The days of the hooded night riders running amok and terrorizing minorities must never return. Suited bigots questioning our votes need to be driven out of office.

The silver lining maybe that such vile and open demonstration of intolerance will result in new, resolute policy to stem systemic racism in government in both policy decision making and enforcement. Let's remember the "Summer of Hate" in 2017, when an equally revolutive show of raw hatred by white supremacists wielded tiki torches in Charlottesville. The then-president referred to them as "fine people." This could be considered a dress rehearsal for January 6th. Ironically, that march in the summer of 2017 has contributed to the election of that city's first African-American mayor.

Let's keep our fingers crossed and hope the incoming administration proceeds with sweeping changes for the better for all of us in society.

Resilience and Success: Karine Jean-Pierre



A young Karine and her parents

By Jocelyne Comeau, MPS

Born of Haitian immigrant parents on August 13, 1977 Karine Jean-Pierre, who is the new Principal Deputy White House Press Secretary for the Biden-Harris administration, wants everyone to know what she learned from her parents: you can do whatever you want to do if you set your mind to do it.

Karine grew up in Queens, New York and holds Haitian and American citizenships. Her father, who earned an engineering degree in Haïti, had to work as a taxi driver when the family, running away from the Duvalier dictatorship, emigrated to the United States. Her mother worked as a home health aide, a nanny caregiver, and in a beauty salon.

Watching her parents, Karine learned that if she gets knocked down, she must get back up and start again, with her parents demonstrating by their examples how hard work and perseverance lead to success.

Compensating for the lack of available good financial opportunities, her mom and dad worked six to seven days a week to earn enough to purchase a home in a good neighborhood for their family.

Concerned about their children's education, they made

sure that Karine and her siblings attended Catholic schools or particularly good public schools in good, safe areas.

Although her parents wanted her to go to medical or law school, Karine chose the School of International and Public Affairs, graduating with an MPA in 2003 from Columbia University. At the age of 20, Karine indicated that David Dinkins, the first Black mayor of New York, was her mentor.

According to the Bay Area Reporter (8/12/2020), Karine recalled that getting into politics was initially intimidating, causing her to experience panic attacks and the imposter syndrome, but she persevered, remembering her parents' guidance every time she faced difficult times, and bounced back up.

Karine has been an activist who has worked in numerous political positions over the years, demonstrating concern for Human Rights. While with the Center for Community and Corporate Ethics, she pushed major companies like Walmart to adopt more progressive practices.

Karine is a faculty member at Columbia University and an adept communicator who is enjoying a dazzling career.



During the last presidential election, she was the Chief of Staff for VP nominee Kamala Harris and became the first person of African-Caribbean-American origins to be appointed as the Principal White House Deputy Press Secretary. Articulate, with an alert mind capable of breaking down and communicating complex ideas in concise and easily understood language, it is no doubt that starting as a grassroots Democratic political organizer, she became a political commentator and an analyst for NBC News and MSNBC, working in several political campaigns and holding various political appointments. During President Barack Obama's first term, she served as Political Director for the White House and held that position in his re-election campaign.

Since Donald Trump's disparaging comment about immi-

grants from Haiti and Africa, Karine never misses the opportunity to remind people that she is "everything that Donald Trump hates." This has invigorated her fight against bigotry and hate, and has increased her ardor to get Black people politically involved and organized as a means to use their voices to affect change in policies and decisions.

Karine indicated that due to the current political climate, it has never been more crucial for every Black person to participate in politics. She reminds us that if we persist and work hard enough, we will succeed; no matter how long it takes: to persevere *IS* to succeed. She recommends we keep a network (rolodex), especially of individuals we have worked with, treat people the way we want to be treated, and never be scared to ask for help.





Mali e Beti



Jonathan Guy Gladding – www.jagartist.com

By Reynald Altema, MD

2 sè marasa ki te viv youn pou lòt e pat ka viv youn san lòt, te fè menm bagay la nan leve chak pitit fi yo, Mali e Beti, kouzin, pòy e tokay. Si w te li deskripsyon chak, ou ta fè konklizyon ke pa gen fason pou yo te ka tolere youn lòt e poutan yo pat ka viv separe youn de lòt. Mali e Beti te rive mare lombrit yo ansanm. Yo te abite tou pre nan Bas peu de choses. Se te bèl mèvèy pou obsève kijan 2 kouzin sa yo te kouwè tomtom ak kalalou. Se sèten ke pataje menm san se yon fenomèn pou respekte.

Beti trè senpatik tandis ke Mali pat nan meli melo ak pèsòn, ou ta di kou gwo pous ki pa nan pèk mèl. Pasyon Mali se te makiye, woze zong dwèt li ak pye l e abiye fen kou pan. Beti te renmen chante, ri, pale anpil. Mali te souvan boude kou kong, li pat gen anpil zanmi. Pou di laverite, tou de te bèl demwazèl, men Beti te gen yon pèsonalite ki te fè prezans li jenere klate yon boukan dife, ousnon enèji reyon solèy midi e an mèm tan distribye oksijèn nan alantou li. Yo rele sa an anglè gravitas, an franse charisme, men nou rele sa poto mitan. Ak Beti, ou pa ka kagou; fè konvèsasyon te natirèl pou li tankou respirasyon, donk depi l yon kote, li anime l.

An plis de sa, Beti te gen repitasyon yon moun ki aktif. Depi l te piti, li te toujou pre pou ede, ke se òganize batèm poupe, e

lè lap grandi li te sèl chèf kanbiz. Pa ekzamp, si w bezwen reyisi yon ti suye pye pou fèt yon moun e ben ou rele l. Li te bon nan koòdinasyon. Se konsa yo te ba l ti non jwèt la fouguese. Mali toujou chèche rezon pou yon bagay pa ka realize. Beti toujou jwenn fason pou akonpli l.

Fason yo panse te kou lèt ak sitwon. Si gen yon bagay ki pou fèt, ke se mete lòd nan dezòd nan yon kay, pran inisyativ pou sote kòd, jwe marèl, ou te mèt konte sou Beti. Avèk Beti, aksyon se plop plop. Avèk Mali, li te toujou pè pou l pat deranje manicure li, sal ou byen chifònnen rad li epi li te paresèz. Yo te rele l précieuse, tout tan l nan tulututu e ap fè enteresant. Men si w te gen afè ak Beti e ben ou te charye 2 chay sou do w paske Mali pat manje anyen ki frèt pou defann kouzin li. Si w te touche cheve Mali ou tap gen pou koresponn ak Beti, bon jan fanm vanyan.

Vanyan nan tout sans! Sak te distenge Beti, li te renmen patisipe nan diskisyon politik ou byen debat nenpòt sijè daktyalite. Li te toujou kanpe doubout devan ti mesye yo lè konvèsasyon sa yo tap fèt. Li te gen bon jijman e analiz li te byen kanpe. Li te chaje ak konvisyon e li pat kwè nan chanje pozisyon daprè kouran ki te an vòg la.



Gérard Valcin (Haitian, 1912-1988), *Konbit (Communal Fieldworkers)*, 1971.

Natirèlman, li te fò lekòl e elèv sou katye a souvan te vin kote I pou ede yo fè devwa. Mali te plis kou mazèt e Beti te plis kou bolid.

Obsève entèksyon ant Mali ak Beti, se te fè yon konstataasyon kijan siwo myèl ka amadwe gou anmè ou byen ki jan kolibri nan chante ka chanje min kalmason, fè I soti nan kokiy li. Beti toujou kouvri kouzin li ak beze, kwoke I, fè kè I kontan e fè I souri. Ak Beti, Mali pat ka rete boude. Li te jwe ak Mali, pou li fè I fè jwèt tifi, chante, danse. Mali te toujou pare pou mete Beti alapaj, kou mete cutex pou li, fè bèl coiffure pou li, limen zong li, montre I ki jan pou I rete bèl. Mali e Beti te rankontre souvan, youn dòmi kay lòt, lè konsa Beti te toujou pwofite pou I pale ak kouzin li, eseye ouvri je I e fè I wè realite ya.

Sepandan, Beti pat ka chanje kè Mali nèt. Kote Beti te liberal, pwogresis, Mali te konsèvatris. Beti te kwè nan yon sosyete ki bay pòv ak rich menm pwoteksyon. Mali te pou moun rich; li te konsidere moun ki pa genyen comme des minables et leur langage, le créole, une pourriture. Malgré tout jefò Beti te fè, oryantasyon politik Mali pat janm chanje.

Yo marye nan de kan separe. Mali te kwè nan avantaj materyel e pat gen okenn sousi de pwoblèm sosyal. Mari Mali te yon komèsan ki te peye ouvrye lemwens ke posib pou I ka fè maksimòm pwofi. Akoz de sa, li te fè anpil moun tounen

kont li. Beti marye ak yon avoka ki tap milite nan yon sendika ki tap eseye òganize ouvrye. De towò sa yo te vin enmi paske yo tap defan de kan ak enterè an konfli. Poutan Beti te rete an bon tèm ak kouzin li menm ke yo te nan kan opoze, paske rasin relasyon yo te tèlman fon! Beti te dèyè mari pa I tèt kale. Li te patisipe nan mouvman pou rekrute ouvrye pou sendika paske sete yon bagay li tap chache an lè ke I te jwenn a tè.

Mali te panse se te tan pèdi paske sa pat rapòte ase lajan, lajan pou achte bijou, rad chè, soulye gwo mak pou I te rete bwòdè e se sa ki te enpòtan pou li. Si Beti te yon lòt moun, li te ka kembe kouzin li nan kè. Se konsa lè malè rive Mali, premye zepòl li chèche se nan men Beti. Magazen mari Mali te boule nan yon dife.

Beti kòm fanm vanyan te sove lasityasyon. Li ofri I yon solyasyon ke yo jwenn nan kèk peyi avanse. Li sigjere youn alyans ant kapitalis e ouvrye. A kondisyon ke ouvrye e sendika a ede I nan rebati magazen a, yo vin patnè. Bòfrè I gen majorite aksyon men sendika/ouvrye yo posede yon minorite pòsyon nan biznis la. Tout moun soti gayan, yon bagay ki rar nan sosyete nou an.

Taking Charge and Moving Forward



By Jean-Claude Dutès, Ph.D.

Have you ever felt stuck as if you were on a treadmill – moving but going nowhere? Have you had many projects in mind, yet find yourself paralyzed, not starting or working on any one of them? Have you ever felt overwhelmed, with little sense of control over your life? Are you watching yourself helping everyone but not attending to your own projects? Do you find yourself often saying yes when you really want to say no? Have you had the experience of seeing peers promoted while you were not?

If you answered yes to any of the above on a regular basis, you may not have a clear sense of purpose for your life, an established direction, or a well thought-out strategy for taking and maintaining control of your life. My goal in this article is to offer you some ideas for retaking charge of your life and getting the most out of it.

If I were to ask you what is your mission in life, what would you say? Do you have one? Do you have more than one at this point in your life? If you do not have one or are not clear that you do, or think you have more than one currently, then this article is for you. On the other hand,

stop reading and go do something else if you know your mission and have been able to persistently work on achieving it. For those who do not, this is your chance to clear the cobwebs out of your line of vision and turn on the cognitive wipers to reveal the path that has eluded you and to free the wheels from the frozen tract.

WHAT IS A MISSION?

For our purpose, a mission is a “wish” that you are pursuing that is so important to you that everything else in your life is secondary to it. This means that nothing is more important or as important as your mission. That is why there can only be one mission at a time.

As we fulfill one, we establish another because life consists of a series of missions: some we choose, while others we accept and recognize as we adapt to changing circumstances in our lives. Life, and our happiness or unhappiness, are linked to a series of acquisitions and losses, with the thrill of achievement often followed by the grief of loss, and so goes the cycle.

Our first and most important mission is to stay alive. It is hardwired in our brain, automatic, innate, and instinctual. It is so basic that it directs our lives without us having to think about it. When our safety is threatened, we immediately take steps to address the danger and protect ourselves. The stress response that we often hear about is a set of brain circuits that are designed to detect and respond to danger automatically. The second mission, which I believe is inherent in the human condition, is to be happy. Happiness here means to be in harmony with yourself, to feel good about yourself, and relatively content about your life situation. Without saying more about it, let us just remark that: when we are happy, we know it, and we surely know it when we are unhappy.

Happiness is the mission we are concerned with. Many of us, however, have difficulty addressing that mission.



Contrary to the survival mission, this one is not as automatic; it requires work on our part. Otherwise, we can only experience short transient states of happiness more related to chances than to our own willingness to persevere. Basically, to be happy requires sustained mental effort. I suspect that is one of the main reasons most people do not follow through on their well-intended "New Year resolutions" or other goals that they set for themselves. Happiness is not heaven or being in heaven. It consists of a series of transient states of well-being that are readily attainable when we can devote the necessary effort to reach and maintain it.

Throughout life we are faced with physical and psychological threats that jeopardize our safety and psychological well-being. Illness, natural disasters, injuries, and the like activate the survival mission. When we are ill or injured, we immediately focus on getting our health back. Nothing else matters but our recovery and our ability to resume our usual functioning. We do so automatically without thinking about it. We reorganize our life, change our priorities, drop, or put on hold most of the roles that we play to take on that of the patient. We reallocate our resources, and through our actions we let others know that we should be the center of attention and be spared most impositions or demands. It is usually easier to affirm and work on that mission because that is expected in western culture, and most people are willing to collaborate and support us in that role, at least for a time.

When we are healthy, although we may not be consciously aware of it, we focus on the mission of happiness. This one is trickier because everyone else is also attending to their happiness needs. To achieve our happiness, we must affirm our desires, often interacting and con-

necting with others who are also on the same path for happiness. Because happiness is highly subjective, others often question why we do the things that make us happy. Even some of our beliefs cause us to question our right to happiness, equating it or its pursuit with selfishness. As Albert Ellis, the noted psychologist, once remarked, "self-interest is the hallmark of mental health," and the pursuit of one's interest is the happiness mission. If you are unable to defend your interest, you are at risk for becoming a malcontent, a person who is chronically frustrated.

FINDING MY HAPPINESS MISSION



To be able to defend your interest, however, you must know what it is. Now, to know your interest, you need to take stock of your life, do an inventory of where you are, the challenges facing you, the wishes you hold, and the frustration you experience. Because of space, I will not go into this process in great detail but will present a sketch that will put you on the right track.

The first step is to take a critical look at your health. If it is good, then your mission is to maintain it; if it is not, then your mission is to address any noted problems or concerns. To be happy, we must be alive, we cannot be dead and be happy, as we humans know it.

Secondly, ask yourself whether you are happy at this point in your life. If the

answer is yes, then you are ahead of the game. If it is no, then you have some work to do to get yourself on the right track. If unhappy, more than likely you have some wishes, goals, or desires that you are not tending to. The things that you need to do to get the rewards you are seeking are being ignored or pushed aside. The reason is not important because you can probably excuse or rationalize your actions to feel better, though you know that feeling of coming short and of not having lived up to your expectations will haunt you and persist in frustrating you. Instead of being happy, you feel miserable.

To get at those unconscious wishes and clarify your sense of purpose, ask yourself these questions: what is my mission at this point in my life? What is it that I need or want the most in my life? If you cannot answer, make a list of your top five activities, the things that you spend most of your time

doing, and rank them in order of importance based on the amount of time you devote to each. In determining the time spent, make sure to also include mental time, the time you use to think about each activity. From that list, you will be able to infer what your mission is, and since you are unhappy, it will not likely be what you wanted it to be. With that information, the discovery that you were spending your time working against you instead of for you, you have just empowered yourself to take charge of your life and change its course.

In case you come up with two or more missions, then you want at least two things at the same time. This suggests that you are having difficulties setting priorities.



You may ask “why do I have to make a choice? Why should one be higher than the other if I could work on both simultaneously? I can chew gum and walk at the same time!” Yes, you can because you are talking about two lower order, automatic activities that do not require conscious thought. Although we can alternate between tasks requiring effortful processing, that attempt usually slows us down. Multitasking, working on at least two tasks simultaneously as we like to think about it, is a seductive myth. Attending to more than one cognitively challenging task at once is really the process of alternating our attentional focus from one activity to another. For simple tasks for which the emotional investment is relatively low, as in walking and chewing gum, that is unlikely to be a problem. However, for goals and aspirations that require a heavy allocation of emotional energy to sustain our motivation over time, we are at greater risk of losing our focus on one or all of the missions. Moreover, in my professional experience, this usually results in

some form of inertia and a lack of any clear sense of direction, like standing at a fork in the road looking at two paths blocking traffic, being unable to move in either direction. The fear of making the wrong choice coupled with a strong desire for certainty and need to control 100% of the outcome are usually at the root of this situation.

If this is the case for you, then you would benefit from a few sessions with a mental health professional. However, as a first step toward fixing this problem, list your two “missions” and the activities associated with each. From looking at the activities, you should have a clear sense as to which one is really the manifest mission, the one you are truly following. Basically, the one that entails the most activities is the one that is your true mission. If this is contrary to what you want, then assign the number one rank to the one that resonates the most with your hopes and aspirations and take steps to alter your daily routines to conform with the intended versus the manifest mission.

By making a choice to focus on one instead of two or three missions, we establish which is the most important. With that information, our brain, particularly our attention system, performs more efficiently. When presented with a hierarchy, an organized set of goals, our brain is better able to activate the appropriate neurocognitive functions and allocate the needed emotional energy to sustain our focus until the mission is accomplished.

Often, we confuse missions and goals, and many of us confound long-term with short-term goals. When this happens, it gives the impression that we are working with two different missions simultaneously. Separating missions from goals require thoughtful considerations. Time to complete a mission generally varies with its complexity and your state of readiness. Of importance here, is not to confuse speed with success. Underestimating the needed time for completion can lead to feeling overwhelmed, while overestimating it can invite boredom.



Think of a mission as a long road trip. The further the destination, the more time to get there, and the more stops needed. Time of arrival will depend on road conditions, driver’s attributes, season and weather, and other unanticipated developments during the trip. To make sure little is left to chance, consider as many

factors as possible in setting your execution plan.

To facilitate the completion of a mission, we need to break it down into shorter interim steps or more readily achievable goals. Of these, there are two sets: long-term and short-term goals, which are identified through a process that re-

quires breaking the path to your mission into smaller steps. In delineating the path further, I often encourage my patients to also identify a list of objectives, as this would allow them to merge the present and the future so that the mission and related goals are always in their working memory.



Objectives are activities, or action steps, as some call them, that you need to do on a continuous basis to work on your mission. At this point, I would like to share one example to illustrate the ideas offered above. The example, which is a collage, came from personal and clinical observations, and do not represent any specific persons or individuals; any similarities with a specific person is purely coincidental.

A married father of three underage children made a successful return to college at age 35 after three previous failed attempts. He did so in the face of expressed doubts from family members, ridicule from some friends and siblings, and resistance from his spouse who interpreted his desire to return to college as a selfish goal. She thought that he was making a decent salary, that they were doing well financially and that going to school at that point in their lives would jeopardize their family's quality of life. Despite the unsupportive stances of his family, he decided to return to college to complete his bachelor's degree, a mission that would take at least four years if he were able to use some of the credits from his previous attempts.

DATE OF DECISION: January 1, 1988



Mission Return to college in September 1989.

Long-Term Goals (needs at least six months to achieve)

1. Obtain the support of his spouse.
2. Obtain the support of family of origin (whom he owes money for previous school loans).
3. Reduce personal spending levels by at least 10% to save money.
4. Identify other potential living arrangements to cut down expenses.

Short-Term Goals (needs at least six weeks to achieve)

1. Obtain his college transcripts.
2. Meet with a school academic advisor to discuss how to facilitate his successful re-entry.
3. Ask his spouse to join him in a meeting with the academic advisor.
4. Identify areas where he could cut personal expenses.
5. Decrease personal expenses and increase savings.

Objectives (action steps, things to do immediately)

1. Make appointment to meet with academic advisor.
2. Visit parents weekly and talk to them about his re-entry plans.
3. Pay more attention to his spouse and children, do more at home and spend time with the children.
4. Cut down on TV watching and increase time reading.
5. Be willing to understand and accept responsibility for his contribution to past failures.
6. Developing the belief that he can become a successful student.

Of importance here is that the mission of returning to college pervaded his mental space. His actions were analyzed in terms of their effects

on that mission. As you can clearly see, this mission is about returning to college, not being successful in college. Upon successful admission, he can establish a new mission: that of obtaining his



bachelor's degree, which would involve different long-term and short-term goals and objectives

SUMMARY

A mission provides a clear focus and direction for what you need to do at any point in your life. Missions change as your life circumstances change, and working on your missions is essential to your happiness; it lets you work on things that are important to you: your self-concept and self-esteem. It allows you to know what is in your best interest and how to live your life to attain the goals you set for yourself. With this clear sense of priority, you are in better position to negotiate with others at home, at work, and wherever. You are more likely to know and work on your own agenda than those of others. More importantly, you will be able to alter your path when you realize your actions are not consistent with your mission.

COMMUNITY NEWS & EVENTS

The information below was passed along to L'OUVERTURE by members of our community who wanted to make the Haitian community aware of free available resources for Palm Beach County residents. On behalf of the Haitian community of Palm Beach county, L'OUVERTURE presents a heartfelt thank you to Ms. Jocelyne Cameau, Dr. Marc Lafalaise and Ms. Anna Pierre, who provided the information listed below. You can contact these places to learn about where and when food will be distributed, how to get masks, apply for financial relief, find virtual camps for children, locate COVID-19 testing sites, and seek employment. Because of continuous political and community development changes occurring within the State of Florida, you should monitor the news daily for updates.

<p>FOOD RESOURCES</p> <p>EAT BETTER LIVE BETTER, INC. 4925 Park Ridge Blvd. www.EBLB.org Boynton Beach, FL 33426 (561) 344-1022</p> <p>FEEDING SOUTH FLORIDA INC A 501(c)(3) Organization 301 W. Atlantic Ave. Suite 06 (561) 331-5441 DELRAY BEACH, FL 33444</p> <p>Main warehouse for FEEDING SOUTH FLORIDA INC 2501 SW 32nd Terrace Pembroke Park, FL 33023 (954) 518-1818</p> <p>MEALS ON WHEELS SOUTH FLORIDA In partnership with the Area Agency on Aging and Elder Affairs Provide & deliver healthy meals & nutrition education</p>	<p>HOUSING AND UTILITIES</p> <p>PBS COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT: For residents of PBC who have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic through loss of income, reduction in hours, or unemployment. Applications must be submitted through CSD's online portal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •https://secure.co.palm-beach.fl.us CSDServiceEligibility/Account/Login.aspx •Housing, Utilities Assistance •Phone number for rent: (561) 904-7900 •Phone number for utilities: (561) 355-4792 •Phone number for seniors EHEAP (electricity): (561) 355-4746 •Homeless Services Access <p>To access Homeless Services, call Senator Philip D. Lewis Center at (561) 904-7900</p>	<p>SAFETY AND HEALTH</p> <p>STAY HEALTHY: DO YOUR PART TO PROTECT YOURSELF Remember the Center for Disease Control acronym (CDC): C- COVER YOUR NOSE AND MOUTH D-DISTANCE YOURSELF AT LEAST SIX FEET FROM OTHERS C- CLEAN YOUR HANDS, FACES, SURFACES etc., FREQUENTLY</p>
<p>COVID-19 INFORMATION</p> <p>TESTING SITES http://discover.pbcgov.org/coronavirus/Pages/ testing-sites.aspx COVID-19 UPDATE (Corona Virus): Florida Department of Health 850-245-4444 COVID-19@flhealth.gov 24/7 phone # 1-866-779-6121 Palm Beach County Emergency Information Line: (561) 712-6400</p>	<p>IMMIGRATION</p> <p>TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS (TPS) Catholic Charities Diocese of Palm Beach 9995 N. Military Trail Palm Beach FL 33410</p> <p>VOTER'S RESTORATION</p> <p>For assistance with voter's restoration rights, call (877) 698-6830 or contact FRRC at Floridarrc.com.</p> <p>A pro bono attorney also will help the individual with fees owed to the office clerks.</p>	<p>MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING FOR PROBLEMS RELATED TO COVID-19</p> <p>https://www.samhsa.gov/find- help/disaster-distress-helpline</p> <p>JOBS</p> <p>UNEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE Career Source of Palm Beach helps you to find a job and provide training opportunity</p> <p>West Palm Beach: (561) 340-1060 Belle Glade: (561) 829-2040</p>



SCHEDULE OF UPCOMING

EVENTS

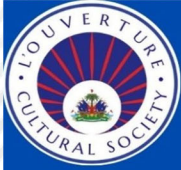
SAVE-THE-DATE

DATE	LOCATION	TIME	EVENT
02/20/2021	Webinar / On ZOOM	2:00 PM	<p>Mental Health Talk</p> <p>Join us, for a FREE presentation, we will describe symptoms associated with ADHD, anxiety, depression and learning disorders in children in general, and in Haitian-American children in particular. In addition, we will also discuss bio-psycho-social factors often observed in the Haitian American community that often accompany these disorders.</p> <p>Guest Speaker: Jean-Claude Dufès, Ph.D.</p> <p>To Register for this free webinar on 02/20/21, please click: Here</p>
05/01/2021	Webinar / on ZOOM	2:00 PM	<p>Lessons of Leadership from the life of Toussaint Louverture.</p> <p>Guest Speaker: Jean-Claude Dufès, Ph.D. & Ms. Cosy Joseph.</p> <p>More information will be provided by April 1st.</p>
05/18/2021	Webinar / on ZOOM	7:00 PM	<p>Roles of women in Haiti's struggle for freedom and independence.</p> <p>More information will be provided by mid-April.</p>
08/21/2021	Webinar / on ZOOM	3:00 PM	<p>The day the Haitian revolution started: August 21, 1791.</p> <p>More information will be provided by mid-July.</p>
10/2021	Webinar / on ZOOM	TBD	<p>Reflections on the life of Jean-Jacques Dessalines.</p> <p>More information will be provided by mid-September.</p>
11/18/2021	Webinar / on ZOOM	7:00 PM	<p>Alexandre S. Pétion: Opportunist, Visionary, Survivor.</p> <p>More information will be provided by mid-October.</p>
12/2021	Webinar / on ZOOM	TBD	<p>Haiti and the diaspora: a difficult dance.</p> <p>More information will be provided by mid-November.</p>



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L'OUVERTURE CULTURAL SOCIETY (LCS)

PRESENTS:

Mental Health Issues affecting Haitian-American children in the US

**Saturday
02/20/2021
2:00 pm - 3:00 pm EST**



*Mental
Health
Talk!*

JEAN CLAUDE DUTÈS, Ph.D.

In this presentation, we will describe symptoms associated with ADHD, anxiety, depression and learning disorders in children in general, and in Haitian American children in particular. In addition, we will also discuss bio-psycho-social factors often observed in the Haitian American community that often accompany these disorders.



**A free event by the L'Ouverture Cultural Society Inc.
PLEASE REGISTER TODAY!**



To Register for this webinar on
02/20/2021, please click: [Here](#)

For Additional Event Information Please Visit Our Website

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L'Ouverture Cultural Society Officers,
from left to right: Mr. Richard, Dr. Richard, Dr. Morel,
Dr. Dutès, Mr. Moise, Ms. Comeau and Ms. Clerge-Joseph

MEMBERSHIP

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