

L'OUVERTURE

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GREETINGS FROM OUR EDITOR, DR. JEAN-CLAUDE DUTÈS

Hello and welcome back!



I am glad that you are looking at L'Ouverture again. The society is moving toward its third year of existence. While our membership has grown just a bit, we have been productive in our programming, nevertheless, and our webinars are reaching a greater number of people from different parts of the world. That is very encouraging! But we also need to have diversity within the organization to inform our programming and to keep the workload manageable. Yes, this my invitation to you to become a member if you have not already done so. Your interactions with our talented team will broaden your skills set, spur your creativity, and bring forth latent talents within you that will enrich us all.

Thank you for joining us!

This issue has emerged as one with a focus on dreams. No, it was not planned! It emerged more than likely because of the situation back home. To prevent apathy or to manage that gnawing feeling of helplessness, many of us pray while some of us dream. I am a dreamer, yet my two feet are solidly planted on the ground. I dream not to escape, rather, I do it as a conscious voyage to an unknown destination in a known area. You see, for me, dreams are the keys that let me unlock the doors to the future of my choice.

As we near the end of this year and look forward to 2023, I often dream of home, of us, imagining what we could be, should be, and of course will be. Imagination is the key that ignites the brain and opens the mind to new possibilities while dreams are the mothers of intentions.

I am dreaming of a Haiti where children have a true childhood of curiosity and wonderment, develop their talents to the limits of their capacities and live in an environment that prizes and values them.

Continued on the following page >>>>



I am dreaming that the children of Haiti are gathering under the tent of freedom, equality, and brotherhood.

I am dreaming and hearing the chorus of a song bellowing that we could be, should be and want to be one people.

I am dreaming of our children, grandchildren, and great-grand-children and so on down the line imploring us, for their sake, to bury the hatchet of discord.

2022 is fading into oblivion, 2023 is rising full of hopes, let make it the future we choose!

As Frantz Duval of "le Nouvelliste" so eloquently observes and enjoins us :

"Tout va si mal en Haïti qu'il y reste beaucoup de place pour le beau, le bon et le bien. Soyons chacun ouvrier de la bonne cause en 2023 pour sortir le pays et chacun de nous du cercle de l'échec."

"Everything is so bad in Haiti that there is still a lot of room for the beautiful, the good and the proper. Let's each be a worker for the good cause in 2023 to get the country and each of one of us out of the circle of failure."

As you keep reading, you will run into a piece that is an adaptation of a webinar by Dr. Paul C. Mocombe on the policies of our first ruler, Emperor Jean-Jacques Dessalines I. It was a brilliant and captivating presentation that I am sure you will find informative. Available on both FaceBook and Youtube, you can access it at louverturecs.org. Dr. Guylaine Richard calls our attention to the need for responsibility and accountability and exhorts us to reject the status quo. Wishing and desiring the change we need in Haiti, I attempt to revive the dreams of our ancestors seeking inspiration from the varied lessons within them. Ms. Astrid Williams takes us on a nostalgic excursion to the Jacmel of her childhood, and at the end, you will once again meet Dr. Raynald Altéma in a story about a lover's quarrel. Not to be a spoiler, I won't say anymore, but if you don't read it, you will miss out!

Last but not least, on behalf of LCS, I would like to thank Mr. Frantz Richard for his contribution as a founding member and treasurer and wish him continued success as he explores new frontier and welcome Mr. Éric Dutès as our newest Board member and treasurer.

Happy new year to you and your loved ones!

Jean-Claude



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GOVERNOR GENERAL AND EMPEROR JEAN-JACQUES DESSALINES: ACTIONS AND POLICIES AND PROBABLE EFFECTS ON HAITI'S HISTORICAL TRAJECTORY: AN ADAPTATION/SUMMARY



Picture source: equestrianstatue.org/dessalines-jean-jacques/

By Jean-Claude Dutès, Ph.D./LP

The presentation informs and fosters understanding of the interplay between complex issues involving race, class, economics, and international politics. It promotes an understanding and appreciation of the issues and factors that contributed to present day Haiti. Instead of hero worshiping, it furthers the understanding of the role of economic systems, racial categories and the social and prevalent attitudes underlying group actions in late 18th and early 19th century St

Domingue. We got to understand the challenges that Dessalines faced during and after the war of independence and gain greater insights into the conditions maintaining Haiti in chaos and poverty today.

According to Dr. Paul C. Mocombe, Haiti's plight is tied to the confluences and contradictions inherent in the interplay of the existence of three economic systems and the four groups that vied for power and



control over St. Domingue and later Haiti. The economic systems are the mercantilist, liberal and counter-plantation/vodou ethics and the spirit of communism approaches. The latter will be referred to from here forward as the Lakou approach and/or system.

In the mercantilist system, a mother country creates a colony to provide it with raw materials that it uses to produce manufactured good that is sold back to the colony and in the global market. The colony can only trade with the mother country and is prohibited from developing its own industries at home. The colony exists only to allow the mother country to build its industries and wealth. The white planter class, the richest group in St Domingue, resented this approach, which to them serves to enrich the industrial class in France at their expense. Like the American states, which broke from England, they favored independence. Overtime, the mercantilist system has retained its protective elements in modern economies in that countries use them to protect their internal markets against threats from the outside. In the case of Haiti, the economic elites are found in two main areas: the agricultural and the import/export sectors. Generally, the agricultural sector which relies on export favors protectionist measures, high tariffs on imported goods that they produce, while the commercial trading sector prefers low tariffs on the goods that they import and sell. For instance, rice growers want higher taxes on imported rice to make sure their product remains competitive, while importers want lower taxes on the imported rice so they can get sell it cheaper and grow market shares.

The liberal system, which emerged toward the end of the 18th century, proposed by Adams Smith, argued for free trade. In other words, the colonies should be able to trade with whomever they wanted and to be able to develop home industries to produce goods and supplies based on the needs of the markets. With the advent of global capitalism, small economies in places like Haiti, has little ability to tailor their economy to match their needs. Instead, they have been assigned certain specific roles as determined by the need of global capitalism. According to Dr. Mocombe, institution like the world bank, international monetary fund and major economies have assigned the following three roles to small economies, severely limiting their margin of movement and development. They are to 1. provide cheap labor, to replace the loss of Taiwan and China as former cheap labor suppliers; 2. focus on selective agribusiness for the production of cash crops based on the needs of global markets and the exploitation of massive tracts of land; 3. focus on tourism, entertainment, and sports. That explains why Haiti's fledging national industries that were flowering in the late fifties and early sixties disappeared. With short sighted governments and a myopic economic elite, implemented policies failed to either protect or support internal means of wealth creation.

The counter plantation or the Lakou system emerged out of the struggle of the enslaved Africans to meet their needs for belonging, dignity, and survival. Primarily, it grew from the strong desire to embrace freedom and to form communities of peers by runaway slaves or maroons. These communities continued to grow after the official end of slavery and during the post-independence



period as the average slave living and work conditions did not significantly change. Under the corvée system implemented by Toussaint, slavery was replaced with another form of coerced servitude for the large majority of former slaves. Instead of working on plantations, many owned by former slaves who emerged into prominence through the ranks of the army, or by their former masters, they escaped into the hinterland and mountains to recreate communities along the lines of their cultural ethnic groups. These groups were instrumental in resisting the French's attempt at re-enslavement from 1802 -1804. While Toussaint's army capitulated and its hierarchy joined the French and fought to disarm the peasantry or former slaves, the maroons, under the leadership of people like Macaya and Sans Souci fought the Kreyol elites, both Blacks and mixed-race groups, who sided with the French.

FOUR GROUPS

Now that we have described the three economic systems and some of their related elements, let's look at the four groups.

WHITES

The whites consisted mainly of a wealthy planter class and a managerial service sector that tended to the needs of the plantations. They were antagonistic to the mixed-race and discriminated



against them. Resentful of the constraints imposed by France on their economic activities, they favored independence, and to safeguard slavery, they called on England for protection. At the time of rebellion in 1791, they numbered about 28,000. Many abandoned their properties and emigrated as the rebellion persisted. Many would return later after Toussaint had restored order and worked with him to rebuild the decimated economy.

MIXED-RACE (MULATTOES)



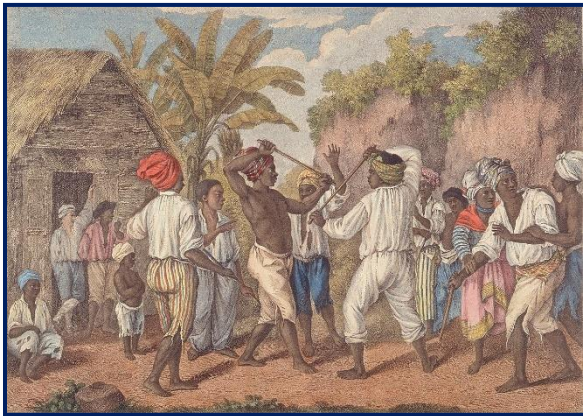
In St. Domingue around 1791, there were 28,000 mixed race persons. Born out of mostly violent and non-consensual sexual encounters between white men and female

slaves, the mixed-race group, called mulattoes, owned one third of the properties and constituted a very wealthy group. Facing discrimination by the whites, they were not allowed to enter into professions or have a say in running the colonial government. Denied the civil rights and forbidden to show their wealth, there were severe constraints on their occupational aspirations, though as a group they were as educated as the French planter class. The only outlet that was open to them was enrollment in a militia that specialized in hunting runaway slaves. As a group they adopted white stereotypes toward the Africans and engaged in discriminatory and racist practices toward Black people that



were prevalent at the time. Though sympathetic to revolutionary France which supported their cause against discrimination, to protect slavery they chose to seek the protection of England after revolutionary France abolished it.

AFRICANS (BOSSALES)



Contrary to the US which engaged in slave breeding to grow its slave population, the French colonists relied on massive import to maintain slave labor. Slavery in St. Domingue was so brutal that it severely shortened the longevity of the slaves. By the time of the rebellion two thirds of the slave population had been born in Africa and were referred to as Bossales. Many were former captured soldiers or warriors who were sold into slavery and had not had sufficient time in St Domingue to develop a slave mental set. Resisting slavery, they ran away from the plantations and built their own communities along cultural and ethnic lines. As a group, they resisted both the French expedition and their allies, the Kreyol elite, property owning Blacks and the mulattoes, never laying down their weapons. Under Toussaint and after independence, they fought against the corvée system, continuing to run from the

plantations to form and live in their own communities. The Bossales' leadership had great animosity towards the Black generals whom they view as traitors. Excellent at harassing French troops using unorthodox military strategy and tactics, they prevented the French from implementing their plan to re-establish slavery.

Today their descendants constitute the majority of destitute Haitians living in urban slums. After being forced off of their land by policies that favored cash crops imposed by the United States of America after the 1915 invasion, they constitute a large pool of cheap labor. Their communities being a fertile ground for gang activities are a source of informal emigration to surrounding countries. Although they were the main fighting force of the revolutionary war and that no one can be elected president without their support, they are the most disenfranchised members of Haitian society. The politicians they elect are more responsive to international concerns and the dictates of the economic elites than to their complaints and plight.

KREYOLS

The Kreyols are the descendants born to African slaves in St. Domingue. They constituted a minority of the slave population and included freed Blacks, some of whom also owned businesses, including plantations and slaves. They looked down on the Bossales and embraced many of the negative stereotypes of Africans prevalent at the time. Overtime, they took over the leadership of the 1791 slave rebellion from the Bossales. Men like Toussaint, Dessalines



and Christophe were all Kreyols. Under Toussaint's order, the Kreyol hierarchy of the colonial army turned themselves in to the French army keeping their positions and for a time allied with the French to pacify the former slaves who refused to give up their weapons.



ALLIANCE

Dessalines, convinced that Toussaint was working with the Bossales, facilitated his arrest and deportation and directed his attention to fighting the Bossales. Contrary to what many Haitians historians have written, the alliance within the Kreyol elite, that is between high-ranking Blacks and mulattoes army officers, grew out of fears that the Bossales were winning and would eliminate them physically when that happens. To forestall that prospect, Dessalines conjured Pétion, his former enemy also working for the French to a meeting to discuss his concern and explore possibility of an alliance. Dessalines agreed to take care of the Bossales and Pétion to bring in the mixed-race officers. Dessalines convinced Macaya to join forces with him. Things did not work out as well between Christophe and San Souci as Christophe had him assassinated. As agreed, Pétion brought in the mulattoes and Dessalines was named general in chief of the revolutionary army.

That alliance was powerful for several reasons. One, it brought in men with

different but effective military skills and strategies. The mulattoes were trained in traditional military strategy, tactics, and weaponry; the Bossales brought in their numbers, knowledge of the area, determination, and guerrilla warfare tactics; and the Kreyol officers brought their knowledge of the land, experience with colonial European forces and troops and weapons.

POST INDEPENDENCE PERIOD

With the conciliation of the non-white groups, Dessalines led the indigenous army to its final victory at Vertières on November 18, 1803. The remnants of the French army were expelled from St Domingue, which became Haiti, with Dessalines as Governor General and soon after Emperor Jean-Jacques I. Dessalines as leader of the new country faced the same complex issues that Toussaint had confronted, with some additional ones: how to create wealth in a free country rife with internal contradictions. Although there were three as opposed to four racial/class groups, the situation remains no less difficult. In addition, the new nation was confronting an international blockade, an economic embargo, along with the looming threat of the return of the French army.

Dessalines did many things. Because of time constraints, however, Dr. Mocombe focused on two major acts. One, the classification of all Haitians as "Nègre," Black, regardless of race or ethnicity. To Dr. Mocombe, this was meant to dissolve racial and ethnic cleavages created by slavery and white supremacy ideology that relegated inhabitants of the colony to a number of inferior caste-like



classifications based on combinations of racial and ethnic heritage. This new policy was meant to restore the dignity of all citizens and challenge the prevalent world view of race.



Though Dessalines is often held responsible for the physical elimination of white's inhabitants of the colony, this is in fact untrue. A white French man signed the proclamation of independence, and French and German soldiers, who deserted the French invading army refusing to fight people who were fighting for their freedom and joined the indigenous army, were allowed to settle in the new country and to become Haitian citizens. According to Julia Gaffield, an associate professor of history at Georgia State University, only French soldiers, and those within the French population, who had taken an active part in the different massacres and assassinations by the French army, were executed. Those with skills deemed needed by the new nation were spared. For Dessalines, the issue was not race but loyalty, based in part on fears of the probable return of the French army, and the value of a French person to the new state. Many French planters whose properties were restored to

them by Toussaint and who supported him as governor General, enthusiastically embraced the expeditionary army and the restoration of slavery.

The second point pertains to the policy that forbade whites, which was synonymous with strangers and non-Haitian citizenship from acquiring land in the country. This was intended to protect the physical integrity of the nation, avoid foreign entanglements, and protect its safety against foreign threat. Of interest, one of the most ardently sought changes imposed on Haiti by the American occupational forces was to give foreigners and foreign businesses the right to purchase land Haiti. This change and related policies led to expropriation of land from farmers and their subsequent pauperization, which in turn led to massive exodus to urban areas and later to informal migration to neighboring countries.

Dessalines had to contend with pressure from the non-white Kreyol elites, who wanted to keep large plantations intact and productive by using the labor of Bossales who were forced to work on plantation owned or leased by members of the Kreyol elites. This policy alienated the majority of non-property owners, who wanted their share of confiscated land as rewards for their participation in the revolution.

With the elimination of most of the French planters, the mixed-race groups, particularly in the south claimed the properties of the whites as rightfully theirs through inheritance. Dessalines refuting their claims canceled all recent sales and leases and initiated the verification of land titles, which alarmed the elites. Their concerns must have grown from alarm to panic after Dessalines made a statement suggesting that he was



advocating for a fair and equitable land distribution to all who participated in the struggle for independence. He is reported to have said “what about those whose fathers are in Africa... will they get nothing?” That statement, according to Dr. Mocombe, was interpreted to mean that Dessalines was about to distribute the land to the people. The Kreyol elites, both Blacks and mulattoes, plotted and assassinated him to maintain the status quo. By so doing Haiti further separated the Kreyols, regardless of skin color, who inhabited the cities, from the Bossales who were relegated to the “outside” or “en dehor,” creating a divided country within one nation. Over time, this cleavage became so entrenched that social mobility was almost nonexistent, and when descendants of the Bossales ascended into the world of the Kreyols, they help perpetuate instead of working to modify the system. The few attempts towards any change were thwarted and proponents severely punished.

What came across was that Haiti has retained the same socio-economic structure that emerged after the onset of the slave rebellion in August 1791. Compared to colonial times there were two major changes: one, the end of slavery as it was practiced until then and 2. the emergence of a significant number of property-owning blacks constituting a bourgeoisie that competed for power with property owning lighter shaded Kreyols. Since the democratic era, there has been an intense competition for votes without any significant increase in empowerment of the majority of Haitians.

From the 17th century to now, colonialism has morphed into neo-colonialism, mercantilism changed into protectionist trade policies, liberalism into neo-liberalism and the counter-plantation/vodou ethics and the spirit of communism communities are disintegrating into a massive body of landless and unemployed population feeding the urban slums of Haiti and driving informal emigration. In addition, the Kreyol leadership, regardless of skin color has persistently mismanaged the resources of the country, and since 1915 has been more responsive to the needs of powerful foreign interests than of Haitians. Once an exporter of food supplies, now Haiti is unable to feed itself due to the implementation of neoliberal policies that do not protect our agricultural goods and foreign imports that stunted the development of any national industry. Under the leadership of a managerial class of technocrats that have risen to implement the neo-liberal policies of global capitalism, we import and beg!

Dr. Mocombe calls for new diplomatic effort to create new openings, explore models of development more suitable to the needs of the majority of Haitians, particularly countries that have been able to sustain their agriculture and thereby feed themselves. This calls for a politics of inclusion that is contrary to the politics of exclusion that we have been practicing.

Painting illustrations source: Wikipedia. Public Domain.
[Saint-Domingue article.](#)





Do not accept the unacceptable



By Guylaine L. Richard, MD, MPH

A people with such a rich heritage cannot, should not, will not accept the ignorance, incompetence and more importantly the arrogance of internal and external vultures.

Haiti, a country with a glorious past, a shameful present, but with an infinite future ought to seek and find the courage to reject the *"politi-chiens"* (politicians) of its past. Her true children must sing loudly that little song known by many: *"San wont, san santiman, demen wa retounen...."* They ought to let them know: *"You are not welcome anymore"* *"Nou pa bezwen nou anko."*

Accountability is a word that deserves to be part of all Haitians' daily vocabulary and mostly daily living. Corruption is what

everyone talks about. They need to make the correlation between accountability which is foreign to most and corruption which is more popular. Why is it important to help the people of Haiti understand that both are learned behaviors? Because, in Haiti, too often people lean toward blame, irresponsibility, and even cynicism to condone their actions. *"Se pa fot mwen."* (It's not my fault). If one occupies a function and doesn't give any results: *"Se pa fot li"* (It is not his/her fault). If one steals money from the common good: *"Se pa fot mwen, tout moun ap vole,"* or "it is not my fault, everyone is doing it." If you make a promise and don't keep it *"Se kite yo pat kite mwen fè li,"* or "they did not let me do it."



You must be wondering why we are talking about accountability instead of responsibility. Here is the difference between the two terms. Accountability is taking ownership of the results and assuming the consequences of your actions. Responsibility is focusing on the defined role and the value this brings to the specific position. Simply stated: accountability is result-oriented, and responsibility is task or project-focused.

In Haiti, elected or selected officials occupy a function but are not taking ownership of the outcomes expected with their roles. Why are they running for a position that they know they are not fit to hold? Because they don't have to be accountable. Why are they seeking re-election/selection for an office where they failed miserably before? Because they don't have to be accountable. Why are politicians in Haiti rewarded for their

incompetence? Because they don't have to be accountable.

So, my question today is for each one of us, Haitian: why are we accepting the unacceptable from politicians, foreign officials/agencies who are not only corrupted, irresponsible but mostly non accountable to give results? *"San wont, san santiman demen kap retounen."* So, a little bump in their butt and here we go, they are back again.

Are we ready to be accountable for the future of our beloved Haiti by not remaining silent at present and resorting to lessons from our ancestors in the past? They fought to give us this piece of land and deserve nothing less but for us to continue this glorious page by saying to internal and external incapables: *"Ale, ale, ale, nou pa vle nou anko."* (Go, go, go, we don't want you anymore).

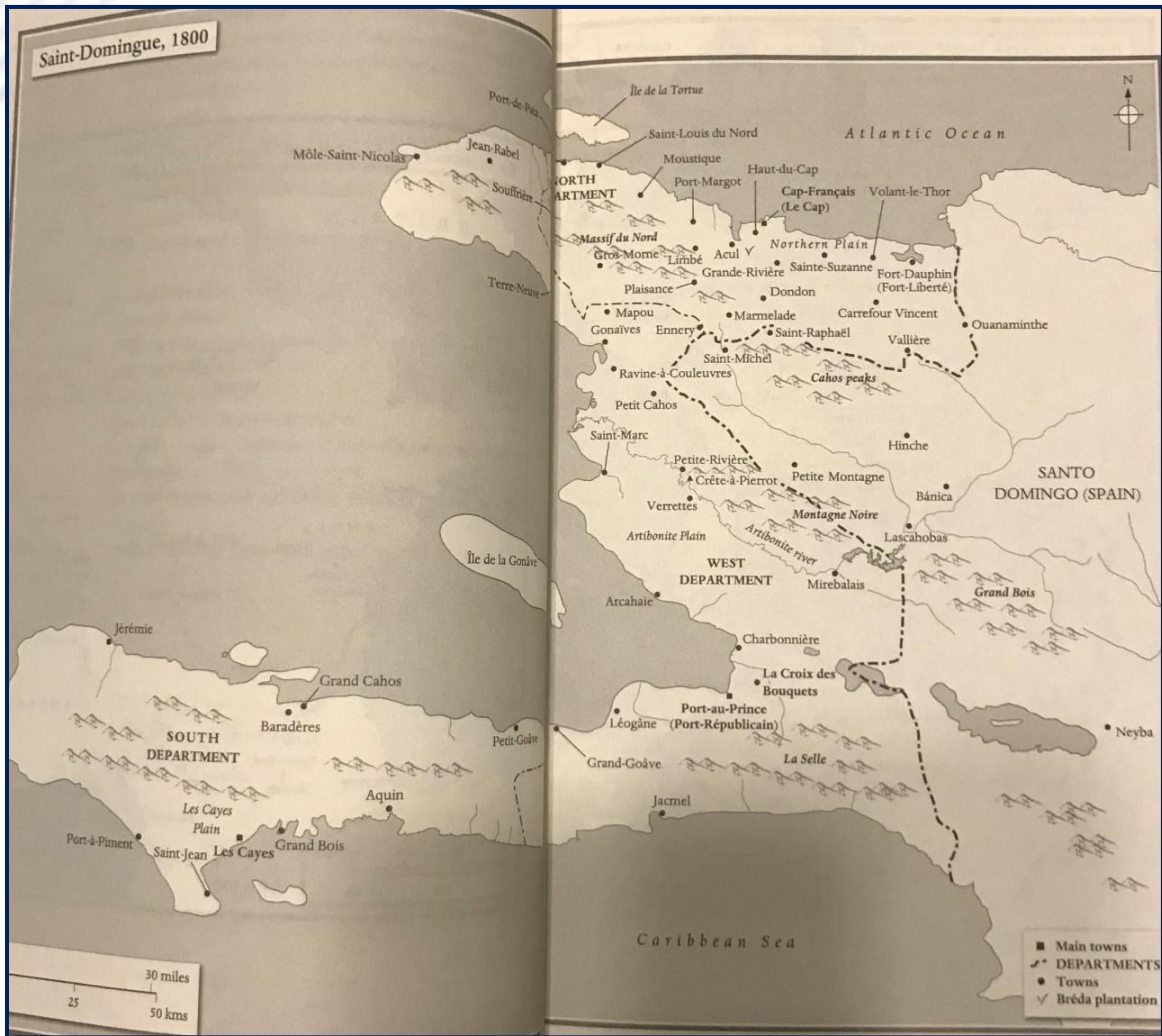


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HAITI SHALL NOT PERISH: DREAMS OF OUR ANCESTORS



By Jean-Claude Dutès, Ph.D./LP

“The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams,” according to Eleanor Roosevelt. Needless to say, I liked the quote. As I pondered it, it led me to reflect on the powers of dreams and where they come from. When I got up this morning, I found myself thinking about the interphase

between attention, emotion, and action. Knowing there is a link between dreams and actions I wanted to summarize in a cogent and easily accessible manner the relationship between them, especially extraordinary actions. Cautiously I concluded that: all acts, great or small, start



with a thought that ignites the imagination, which then converts it into a dream that in turn fires and sustains the mind into action.

Always preoccupied by the state of events in Haiti, I found myself thinking about our heroes. With Haiti the way it is, I have been trying to understand what went wrong. When a house is crumbling, one wonders about its builder and foundation. Is there a structural flaw in the design that the builder missed? Relying on my twenty-first century mind, it was easy to be a Monday morning quarterback. I generated quite a few hypotheses about where they went and what they did wrong. As the saying goes “depiw mouri, ou antò.” Dead, you cannot defend yourself. That did not seem fair. Moreover, history is always a matter of interpretation, of shifting perspectives, even in the presence of noble intentions that selectively address past events.

Being fallible like we all are, our ancestors made decisions without knowledge of their future implications or consequences. Human nature is dynamic and unpredictable. As time moves, predicted events may occur later or in a different sequence than expected while unpredicted ones can thwart the best conceived plans. Or, as is often the case, may not occur at all. Think about what happened to the plans of the Tainos, Aztecs and Mayans after the European invaders stumbled into their continent. Am I going to blame them for the decimation of their civilizations? Of course not!

Closer to home, General Henry Christophe, following governor general Dessalines's orders to erect forts to protect Haiti against

a probable and much anticipated French invasion, built the formidable Citadel Henry that dominated the coast of the northern Haiti. As we know, however, not one shot was ever fired from its canon at an enemy. The French did return at a different time and in a different way, invited from within, when our resolve had been eroded and our nascent society fractured by internal squabbling after a long civil war. Am I going to blame Christophe for building a sanctuary designed to keep the Haitian people alive while fighting the enemy? Definitely not!

So, I decided to focus on what I call “their dreams.” Instead of looking for weaknesses or faults, I looked for their strengths. If Haiti is disassembling today, could it be that we are missing or not using properly the gifts our ancestors gave us? Pulling from what I have read and heard about our history, I selected five of our illustrious ancestors who have done at least one thing for the greater good of the collective that is undisputed, and which seems to me to embody their spirit. You may or may not agree with me. That is my view, I cannot censure myself in anticipation of your potential disagreement, although I value and would enjoy hearing or reading your ideas. I am comfortable with thoughts or ideas contrary to mine, and I am eager to listen and to read your thoughts too.

I believe that our ancestors like everyone had dreams that underlie their actions, and I just wanted to share the dreams at a time when everything back home is in complete disarray. These dreams, which I see as gifts that they have bequeathed to us, can be



used to generate, or enhance our individual dreams for the rebirth of our homeland. Dreams that are persistent create a state of mind that develops into a compelling sense of urgency with an obsessive quality that drives us toward their realizations. Now, we need to dream about Haiti in a larger and more inclusive way than before. They thought of the means needed to create the nation, now we have to find the winds to keep it afloat and sailing.

DREAMS OF OUR ANCESTORS

François Dominique Toussaint Louverture:
"I can do it too, and I can do it better than you!"



He taught slaves how to lead and masters how to obey, and out of divided and polarized groups, he created the first multi racial society of the new world.

Victoria (Grann Toya) Montou: It is not about me; the struggle is about us.



After helping Dessalines's mother to give birth and watching her die, she made the ultimate sacrifice, giving up on her plan to seek her own freedom and choosing instead to return to servitude so she could ensure the survival of our future liberator. She sacrificed her freedom to free a race.

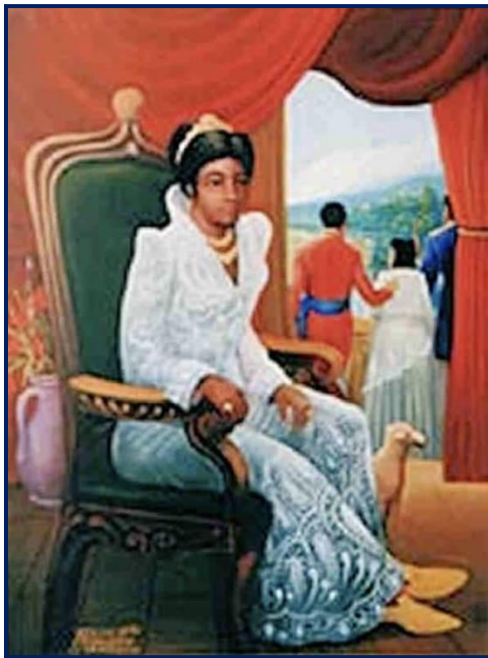
Jean-Jacques Dessalines: Live free or die!





He chose death over slavery, created the first free nation of the new world and lighted the torch of liberty for all the world to see.

Marie Claire Heureuse Félicité Bonheur Dessalines: We are all part of the same human family, regardless of race, color, or class.



She persuaded general Jean-Jacques Dessalines to allow her to reach out to the women and children of besieged Jacmel, tended to wounded soldiers and prisoners, adopted all of her husband's love children, and in a spirit of inclusiveness, organized the first soup jourmou distribution, as part of the first celebration of our independence, to make sure that all, not just a few, take part in the festivities.

Alexandre Sabès Pétion: United we stand!

He chose the least traveled path, picking unity over division when it mattered most, making the birth of Haiti a reality and took the first stab at land distribution.



Henry Christophe: Order and dignity at all costs!



He rejected Napoleon's army ultimatum to surrender, choosing instead to burn his own house in defiance, envisioned Haiti as equal among nations and aspired to heights unimaginable by his peers. The achievements of his kingdom gave us



Haitians a claim to glory that we have yet to match again.

Jean-Pierre Boyer: Haiti one and indivisible!



He made Hispaniola whole again as the Republic of Haiti from north to south and west to east and kept her unified for 21 years.

RESCUE, REPAIR AND RECOVERY

Our ancestors built the nation by dreaming of freedom, coming together to fight a common foe, being inclusive then, and sacrificing self-interests for the good of all. They constructed the vessel of nationhood as best they could. Now, it is up to us to

repair or renovate it as needed. To do that we need to envision more boldly, push harder against our comfort zone to move toward instead of against one another. I believe that the dreams are aspirational. Within each one, we can find the inspiration to move in the direction of the collective good and repeat the magic of transforming the impossible into reality and the improbable into a common phenomenon. They have done the impossible, creating a nation; now we have to do the improbable, keeping it together. They thought of the means needed to create the nation, now we have to find the winds to keep it afloat and sailing.

To parody and respond to DeTalleyrand's "curse," without repeating his nefarious words, "nous n'allons pas nous laisser cuire dans notre propre jus." Haiti shall not perish, "se grès kochon an, ki pou kwit kochon an," with the assistance of all and, this time, for all of her children.

My dream: Haiti shall live on, one for all and all for one!

What is your **dream** for Haiti?



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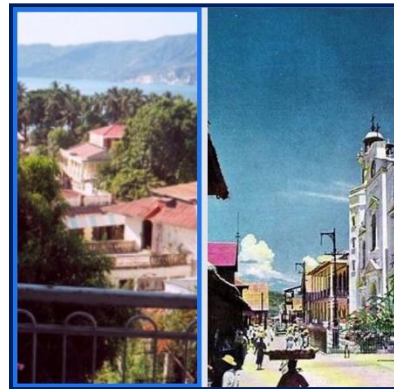
I REMEMBER JACMEL



By Astrid Nicolas

Having emigrated to the US from Jacmel at the tender age of 8, I assimilated quickly into the American culture. Growing up in Elmhurst, Queens where there was a small community of Haitians allowed me to retain some of my Haitian heritage, thereby shaping who I am today. The recent turmoil in Haiti has me pondering over the situation in my homeland, my birthplace and that of my ancestors. Fond memories of my formative years are ingrained in my consciousness, and I am finding myself reminiscing more and more over my brief experiences as a child in Jacmel.

Growing up across the street from my maternal grandparents, next door to my mother's sister and my 3 cousins; in the



same town as my mother's brother and his family, as well as extended relatives, I

was surrounded by those who cared about me. My grandmother bought coffee and cocoa from small vendors for resale to bigger merchants for export. She was only 5 foot 2 inches but a powerhouse. My grandfather was tall at 6 foot 1 but very calm and always singing or swinging in his "dodine" or rocking chair. They raised nine children and were



now enjoying their grandchildren. We played “camion” in the family room by lining dodines and chairs in a line and pretending to be drivers or passengers. On Sundays, after attending mass at Cathedral St. Philippe or St. Jacques, my grandmother always made us café au lait. I thought I was so grown to be drinking coffee. My paternal grandmother also lived nearby but my recollections of her are not as vivid.

In those days, we had no television, cell phones, or video games. We played with what I consider now the simplest but the



best toys. Talking about the toys with a clinical neuropsychologist recently, I came to understand they were not only toys but tools that stimulated and promoted our neurocognitive abilities. Wow, fancy words meaning that these toys facilitated our ability to control ourselves, solve problems and learn to live with others. For instance, playing Woslè assisted with hand/eye coordination, the integration of gross and

fine motor skills and executive skills such as planning and judgement and self-control. Kay or mancala must have helped with arithmetic and attention focusing, marbles facilitated visual motor integration. Remember the hoola-hoop? Well, it fostered modulation of gross and fine motor abilities and physical coordination. I wonder if it also helped with the “groove,” and grace. Jumping rope for hours with friends and bantering back and forth provided plenty of mental and physical exercise in addition to good social skills. Little did I know then that having fun helped me become smarter. I wish someone had told my father that!

There was nothing better than sitting on the front porch, watching people go by, and listening to Kric Krak stories. My cousin Stanley usually told the best ones. We walked almost everywhere as, at that time, there were only a few cars and almost no motorcycles. Going to Oranger, a nearby town, was a treat as we would get to pick the biggest mandarines that I ever saw. Raymond-les-Bains, the beach about eight



miles away, was fun, but I never went too far into the water. Instead, I

enjoyed searching and collecting amandes, or almonds, eating them before using a rock to crack them open for the delicious nut.



Cocoyé olé with “nannan” or coconut with the soft interior were refreshing and there was the show that always fascinated me: watching the men with their machètes nimbly climb up the tall coconut trees lining the beach.

Jacmel in the late 50’s and early 60’s left me full of fond memories. There was without fail the crowing of the rooster announcing that dawn was on its way. The days were spent going to school chez “Les Soeurs” near “La Place de Jacmel” which was only a 10-minute walk from home. My mother would always give me some change to buy menthe/mint candy, or pistaches grillees/grilled peanuts, from the street merchant in front of the school gate. In school, you better had memorized your lessons. If called on and you were unable to recite them, you were in big trouble. As punishment, you had to stick your palm out and get swatted by the teacher with a ruler. That was not fun! Sometimes, the punishment at home was worse than the one at school as my father, a professor, wanted nothing less than perfection and rapid learning. I don’t think he heard about the learning curve. Going to the bathroom at school was always an ordeal for me as I was always afraid of falling into the hole of the latrine. We had our main meal at noon and supper, a lighter meal than what is usually served here in the US, in the evenings. Sometimes at night I would hear the sounds of drums beating from far away into the mountains and late into the night, or until I fell asleep.

Visiting at my uncle Gerard Cadet’s house near the marché and the church was always



a treat. My cousin Ralph had the strangest pets in matchboxes. He called them “bêtes d’argent” and gave them a milky plant to eat. They were supposed to make coins but I never saw any. There were also the anolis, or lizards, on which he would perform surgery. Always the party animal, he taught us to dance by having us put our feet up on his. We had no lack of entertainment being surrounded by a myriad of exciting personalities generating wonderful experiences.

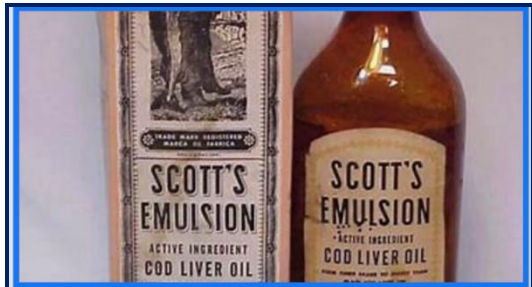


Living in a tropical island has its benefits. Fresh food was not lacking; eating fresh fruits such as quénèpes, cerises, mangoes,



abricots, cane-a-sucres, raisins bois, tamarins, cocoyé avec nannan; delicious foods like larbe a pain, poisons griller, pisquettes, poule dur/pintade/pigeons; drinking jus Grenadia, corossol, and grenadines. It was always worth waiting for the street peddlers to purchase kola, doucounou, rapadou and creme sorbetierre or our favorite sweet treats. On Sunday afternoon we would go to Place de Jacmel to meet and play with friends.

It was important to stay healthy and the



daily dose of Emulsion Scott had to be tolerated. When sick, the teas of choublak, Ti Baum, and citronelle were nicely sweetened with brown sugar. Let's not forget the rubs with huile maskreti which is our go-to for all ailments. Who can ever forget that strong smell? The occasional bath or Bains de feuilles/Ben Fèy with leaves from corossol, papaya and orange was medicinal and something that I always enjoyed as it was refreshing and smelled so good.

As a child, carnival was both exciting and scary. It offered a cornucopia of colors, strange masks and bizarre personalities that kept me both thrilled and frightened. One time, I felt special, like a little princess after my father picked me up and sat me around his neck. Sitting on his neck and shoulders, I felt safe, proud, and happy among the crowd. Definitely, I could not have described the feelings then, but I knew being that high and able to see everything felt really good. I could see the different figures representing infamous personalities, fear inducing or comical figures. There were the chaloskars, making fun of a former homicidal general, (which really scared me), zel mathurins, lansèt kods, juiferans on stilts, and Rara bands; the beautiful colorful costumes, the popular music groups, the queens/kings on the "chars," or floats and the reveling crowds produced a lot of emotions such as



excitement and fear. It was fun to watch it all from the safety of my grandparent's balcony as the costumes and crowds were at times overwhelming. But what is Haiti without our yearly carnival?



Christmas in Haiti was a special time for children. I thought that all children were like me and enjoyed Papa Noel, small gifts, eggnog, and an Arbres de Pain/Christmas tree with a "crèche". I'll never forget the Christmas when I recieved a toupie or spinning top from my grand uncle Tonton



Soup Joumou
Photo: Franck Fontaine

Édouard Cadet, the one with the house bearing the red iron "witch's hat roof topper," which is now a historical site. On New Year's Day, as is customary, we celebrated our independence and freedom from slavery and had the mouthwatering soup joumou.

My mother ran the family bakery and oftentimes took me to work with her. How can one forget the smell of fresh baked bread, pâté, akasan, and mamba? Always curious, when at my grandparents, I liked to be near Marcelle, the servant, who was considered like family. I constantly asked questions about what she was doing. Sweet and patient, she indulged my curiosity answering me as she cooked the meals on the small metal stoves in the outdoor kitchen. She loved to pamper us and gave us so much love and attention.

Occasionally, we travelled to Port-au-Prince by "camion" or truck, to visit some of my

mother's sisters. This was always an all-day affair with the crossing of multiple rivers. There was no highway through the mountains at that time and the trip always proved to be long and tiresome. When we reached P-A-P, it was "small town meets big city." At that time, in the early 1960's, Haiti's capital compared to Jacmel seemed huge, exciting, and full of life.



All in all, my childhood in Jacmel was one that I don't want to ever forget and hope that my memories resonate with some, if not most, of your recollections and experiences. As a child, I could not imagine that so many children went without and not everyone was as fortunate as I was.

I hope and dream that someday not too far in the distant future, every child in Haiti can be as fortunate as I was to have as wonderful a childhood as I did. I will keep Haiti in my thoughts and prayers and wish that you could do the same. "Lakay sé lakay."





LITERARY CORNER

SPAT AND RECONCILIATION

Par Reynald Altéma, MD



“Tis the season to be merry” sounded so malapropos to Henri Daniel, aka HD, when he received this text message while jogging on a crisp, cold, early morning in Brussels while vacationing with his sweetheart, “What the hell were you doing hanging out at a blue district? What kind of love is this when you can’t control your zipper?” His girlfriend Theresa must have been really mad, and he is now in the doghouse as far she was concerned. Doghouse as opposed to being on mutual cloud nine for he wanted nothing less than sweep her off her feet. Doghouse was like the very last dungeon he wanted to be a resident at because he had made a herculean effort to atone for all his sins. Sins of an exuberant youth besotted with a gargantuan desire for hedonism, aided and abetted by a flock of beautiful damsels that seemed to always cross his path. They also seemed to share his craving for carnal pleasure. Fact was that indeed he was forever in the throes of a rite of passage, a period of his life that has lasted longer than

he cared to remember. He kept delaying the decision he knew that sooner or later he had to come to terms with.

The irony was that for all those years he was having a good time and was in an on-and-off relationship with Theresa, she never caught him with his pants at half-mast. For the past six months, he has purged others’ seven-digit numbers to focus on his relationship with Theresa. The bug that bites most of us at one time or another, had instead taken him by storm. It had infiltrated his skin in such a high concentration that it readily dissipated through his pores, with a subtle aroma of an enlivening musk. It also lit a spark that quickly propelled into a brazier heating his heart’s cockles to the brim. HD had discovered love and he liked it because it was acting like an elixir pulsing the endorphins, leaving a trail of intoxication and addiction.

HD couldn’t find out fast enough what was behind the vitriolic message sent. He had



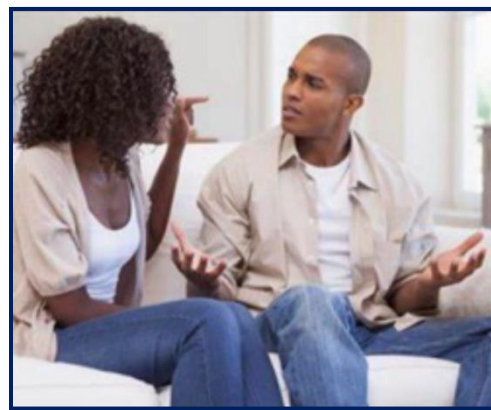
certainly not been engaged in any monkey business since a last fling before he made a commitment to make a go of a monogamous relationship. Besides, he no longer felt the need to taste the broth from an unfamiliar cup or the brew from an unknown mix. He kept mulling over what could have triggered such an irate reaction and he kept coming up with a blank answer. He was at wit's end.

His girlfriend Theresa was also at wit's end. It took her quite a long time to decide to settle down and open her heart and accept to be in a committed relationship. Professional career, financial independence, emotional liaison on her fickle terms, and the vaunted solitude for quite some time reigned as her credo. However, slowly but surely, the notion of we replacing I was gaining some real estate in her psyche. A biological clock ticking inexorably, her friends marrying one after another had taken a toll on her. The garter from the bride landed on her lap at the last wedding she had gone to. Far from heeding such a superstitious sign, nonetheless the symbolism associated with it dawned on her. Her priorities in life were in the midst of a rearrangement. HD, a friend she has known since her college days and toward whom she always felt an attraction in equal measure to an aggravation, might be considered for a liaison up close temporarily and at arm's length otherwise, a course reminiscent of a flux and reflux pattern.

Yet companionship didn't come without a steep price. It amounted to a significant sacrifice to give up some of her highly esteemed solitude. Breaking the habit of

playing solitaire for a heart to-heart conversation as a reflexive move took some doing. Not surprisingly, just like any birthing, the hardship enhanced the value of the offspring. In the best possible tradeoff, she was slowly giving up a selfish pleasure for a shared one. In the offing she discovered a joy ride and good karma that anointed her soul with bliss. Like the sharp turn of a bend in a road, she was discovering one of the pitfalls of a smitten heart. She was experiencing the searing pang of the sting of a two-calamity known as jealousy. This was a new territory laden with shards to injure bare feet, burning liniment for the skin, and fetid dung.

The source of her disarray was the discovery by happenstance of a message, 'Huren in Domburg' in HD's cell phone the night before. They both were vacationing in Europe and HD had joined her from Germany. All she did was to use Google translate a while after HD had gone jogging and it left no ambiguity about its meaning. That sentence in German means "Prostitutes in Domburg." No better proof of infidelity than that. Airtight evidence.



Livid, with her nares flaring, her lips pursed, breathing heavily,



"Don't f... lie to me, you bastard!" She hurled this salvo toward him when he returned from the jog. HD was sweating from the exercise as well as the expectation of the cauldron he would be up against, even if innocent.

"What am I being accused of?" He asked this question softly. The calm tone infuriated her more. She showed him the message and the translation next to it.

"You are making a molehill out of nothing." He smiled while saying this and that set her off.

"It's bad enough you couldn't keep your pecker in your pants, now you are acting like a real d... I have had it with you, and I should cut it off!"

Acting cool or raising his voice could only aggravate the situation because she had it set in her mind that he was at fault. From her perspective, he could only try to lie his way out of it. All the same HD had never seen Theresa in this state before. Later on, she would describe it as "crossroads of fear and temper tantrum, the type of uncontrollable sensation that makes one behave in unpredictable fashion."

"Ok darling, this is nothing but an unfortunate but easily explained misunderstanding. My friend Achmad from Suriname who works in Germany but travels extensively throughout Holland, advised me in a phone conversation to stay in Domburg, Netherlands. Lest I forget, he texted me the message."

"S...! You are now taking me for a fool! How does that square? Of course, since he lives in the country, he is a connoisseur and is well placed to tell you where to go to find these lowlifes. Ain't this right?"

So convinced was she of his guilt that she felt nothing but hatred at the time she sarcastically emitted these words, and she started throwing his clothes on the floor of the hotel room.

"Darling, what he sent me wasn't in German but in Dutch, the language spoken in Holland. It resembles German and at times uses the same words that carry different meanings. I grant you this translates into "prostitutes in Domburg" in German. However, in Dutch the words mean "rent in Domburg." Don't take my word for it. Look it up in Google translate. Domburg happens to be a lovely seaside town in the Netherlands. I wanted to surprise you and take you there, but no, you had to spoil it and curse at me, making me out to be a bad guy when all I wanted to do was to please you. How does that make you feel?"

Love causes the heart to go through all sorts of acrobatic pirouettes in short order. Theresa was mad one minute and then perplexed, remorseful, ashamed, upset at being shown up, embarrassed of letting her jealous instinct overcome her better judgment and yet flattered by the courtship. Sensing the tug of war raging inside of her and wanting to defuse the awkward and tense situation, he did her the honors of doing the Google translate. He then dutifully showed her in Google images some really lovely pictures of this seaside resort town



and its two other namesakes: in Germany located no more than 100 miles from Berlin as well as the one in Suriname, also a seaside town.

“So, would you like me to take you there?” HD asked in a sotto voce manner, the type of murmur barely whispered into the ear that carries far more heft in persuasion than a loud exclamation. HD was searching for the best way to slide an off-ramp option to lessen the destructive storm and pave the way to the necessary, soothing calm. Like from fisticuffing to spooning.

“Perhaps,” she answered like an ingénue, far removed from the impish, feisty woman with a tart tongue. Her voice was as soft as the decibel of his whisper. As if on cue, she was latching on the olive branch tendered, and segueing by ridding her mind of malevolent darkness and inviting the uplifting grace of brightness. Theresa was finding out the hard way, even this late in her life, about some feelings she hadn’t known she was capable of harboring. As much as she liked the serenity of a tete-a-tete by a moonlight, she disliked the sensation of fear of a tremendous loss associated with a jealous fit. She also held her pride at bay to thaw the ice of dissension, a measure she wouldn’t have taken when younger and easy prey to surliness for its own sake.

“Darling, I am sorry, but you have unleashed some powerful feelings I wasn’t aware I was harboring. So yes, I am jealous, and I can’t help it. It comes with the territory. Yes, love can’t stand sharing. I am discovering this the hard way.”

Just as spontaneously, Theresa picked up his clothes and neatly folded them. There was a time she would have remained upset for quite a while and finding it hard to accept she was at fault, would hang on to the hard feelings. She was happy to be more lucid and comfortable in her skin to go beyond these little pesky habits that nag, dog, irritate a companion over a trifle.

“Actually, you had better take me to Domburg so I can see with my own eyes how pretty it is.”

Theresa smiled when she uttered these words, giving the clearest signal that the recent fit belonged to a bygone era bereft of appeasing snuggle and unifying cuddle. That resonated as pure music to HD’s ears since he had plotted the trip carefully, like a dry run of a honeymoon. Needless to say, she kissed him and that escalated into their customary playful carnal merriment.



The spat among lovers is as quick and intense to uncork as to fetter, to fester and amplify as it can be buried and forgotten all in a seamless progression. This one was no different. HD, just like his soulmate, always looks for the eclectic. She had impressed him with her elaborate birthday celebration she threw in Carmel, California the year before



and he wanted to pay her in kind. HD was drawing from his well of experience with humans to find the happy medium with his lover.

From Brussels, they caught a train to Amsterdam and then rented a car to take a very picturesque excursion along the coast to Domburg. The countryside in Holland displays the evidence of mankind learning to live in harmony with a whimsy environment and yet achieving resounding success. Engineering derring-do and acumen conflated with artistic sentience to wow and create one gem after another.

Accustomed as Theresa was with the quaint little towns along the New England coast, especially Cape Cod and Rhode Island, she couldn't help but be astonished with the display of earthen-hue windmills, lattice of tree-branching canals acting like natural sponges, variegated but lush meadows, rustic homes, splaying a bucolic imagery ad infinitum. Like a fairy tale. She pinched

herself to ensure this was not part of a daydream but real, sultry tapestry of colors, forms, function. In vivo postcard pictures abounded as HD drove from a beautiful hamlet after another. They had exotic names like Zierikzee, Harlingen, Naarden, Giethoorn. They stayed overnight at Giethoorn and she liked it so much she didn't want to leave but relented and went on to Domburg. It turned out to be what the doctor ordered, an artists' colony, old, quaint, with nice beaches. She came, she saw, she liked. She especially liked what happened next in Domburg.

Over dinner, HD did the ultimate gesture to jettison any remnant of bachelorhood. When she least expected it, "Darling, would you like to marry me?" He genuflected like a true gentleman and a scholar. The diamond ring was shining and rivaling the glint on Theresa's face. Theresa who was beginning to wonder about this next level in their relationship felt a levitation skyward to the firmament on this cold day of December.



Picture source: www.walcherenvakanties.com/de/umgebung/domburg

