

L'OUVERTURE

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION | DR. JEAN-CLAUDE DUTÈS, EDITOR | VOL II NO 2



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GREETINGS FROM OUR EDITOR, DR. JEAN-CLAUDE DUTÈS

Hello,

I hope that everyone had a wonderful Mother and Father's Day and is continuing to stay safe despite increasing risks to our personal well-being. These days, I find it more priceless than ever to cherish those who are close to me while they are still within my reach. The future does not inspire as much confidence as it used to with respect to personal safety.



SAYING HEALTHY: DOING WHAT YOU CAN WITH WHAT YOU HAVE

We are witnessing so many distressing events these days that it is difficult to feel confidently in control of our lives. Many of us are experiencing an acute sense of pervasive vulnerability that generates strong feelings of insecurity. There is a reported mass killing almost daily in the US. How do we protect ourselves and families, and more importantly, our children? I am in a state of constant vigilance these days when I am in a public place where people aggregate. When in a store, the first thing I look for is an escape point or a hiding place where I could make a quick exit or take cover. I tell my son and granddaughter to watch people's hand and the direction of their gaze without being too intrusive just in case they run into a potential "shooter." When aware of tension in my body, and if I cannot relax, I take long deep breaths to calm myself.

RAYS OF HOPE BUT THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

Life in this country, however, when viewed from the lens of history, reveals indications of progress, with mixed signals. Derek Chauvin was convicted of the murder of George Floyd, a significant step toward holding Police Officers accountable for using abusive practices in their interactions with Black people. President Biden signed into law a bill making June 19th, the date on which slavery finally ended in this country, a federal holiday, a noteworthy step in the recognition of the importance of Black people in America and, more importantly, an official acknowledgment of the nefarious nature



of slavery. Yet, the republicans and the states that they control are actively taking steps to suppress voting. Furthermore, they want to prevent continued progress towards racial justice by putting constraints on how history is taught in this country. Basically, they do not want Americans, especially children, to learn the real truths about slavery, the genocide of the Native Americans and sexism. They do not want any light shown on the discriminatory actions of the previous generations, and any understanding of their residual effects on the institutions of this country to favor European American males relative to and at the expenses of another gender and other racial groups. In this hierarchy of opportunities, African Americans have been at the greatest disadvantage. Through attempts to restrict voting, they are trying to move back the clock and disenfranchise people of non-European ancestry and the poor in order to protect and maintain the widespread misguided white supremacy beliefs underlying systemic racism and white privilege. That is what the “Make America great again campaign” is all about.” This is not a time for complacency but one to get involved in the struggle to protect your rights.

“PREKOSYON PA KAPON”

With respect to Haiti, if we are to believe reported information, the situation is becoming less sanguine. A COVID-19 variant has penetrated the invisible barrier that our brothers thought they had against the virus and about which many talked in a smug tone. According to them, we in the diaspora had lost our ways. All we had to do was to leave everything to God, other supernatural protectors, and folk medicine. Some even claimed that Haiti was too poor to be affected by COVID-19. Unfortunately, the virus is not a selective disease that only afflicts the rich or the wealthy. It is an equal opportunity virus that is starting to ravage the Haitian population, attacking whoever is more vulnerable, or more inviting by not following safety guidelines. If you do not want flies in your house, you must take steps to prevent them from coming in.

Many brothers and sisters’ apparent nonchalance and/or false sense of superiority, which could be defensive reactions against helplessness, are no match for this deadly disease. What will Haiti do? Or what will we do, those of us outside of the country? I, for one, will advise everyone I come in contact with to take the vaccine when and if it becomes available where they live, to practice social distancing and to wear a mask. I would also tell them that this is not a time for gathering in groups of strangers or for partying with large numbers of people in a small area. I hope that everyone in the Haitian diaspora will do the same when talking to their parents, children, or relatives in Haiti. The idea here is to continue using folk medicine interventions while also borrowing a page from scientific medicine. As the saying goes “*prekosyon pa kapon.*”

A GOOD STEP: A GLIMPSE OF THE SUN IN A CLOUDY SKY

On the political front, the Haitian government under pressure from both internal and external sources has through the “Conseil Electoral Provisoire” postponed a scheduled referendum for a new constitution. This is an auspicious development, as it allows for time to engage in a broad cross-sectional dialogue to seek and forge a consensus about the kind of country we want and establish the process to use to make it happen. Whether to amend or replace the present constitution with one that echoes our ideals, values, culture, and character could then be addressed in a more inclusive manner.

Many, however, would say that another constitution would not resolve our problem. We have had many constitutions. I heard from a presenter being interviewed on the program, “Le point de Metropole,” (06/10/21) that we are on our 29th constitution. The issue for me then is not whether the current constitution is good or bad, practical or impractical, or effective or ineffective. Rather, it is why have we not made any one of the 29 constitutions work? I was against the referendum, not because I am against



the government or pro the so-called opposition. I see them as being cut from the same fabric. Neither is credible, as each one seems to be seeking to maintain a system likely to perpetuate the culture of impunity, which breeds unmitigated corruption, the continued disenfranchisement of the Haitian people and the further impoverishment of Haiti to the benefits of a small group and their foreign partners.

IS IT A CULTURAL ISSUE?

We cannot live with a constitution, but we cannot live without one either, it seems. Moreover, we have never, ever, been faithful to one. From a clinical perspective, I strongly suspect the presence of strong narcissistic trends in our culture that are expressed through individualized violations of the rights of others. Before the democratic era, these acts were attributed and justified by virtue of the perpetrator's power status: "mwen se chèf, mwen fè sa m vle," "I am the chief, I do what I want." Nowadays, democracy is used by those without any source of politically sanctioned power as an additional reason for infringing on others' rights. It seems as though we have great difficulties respecting rules or laws in general, with a particular problem with fairness. We are still living out the old adage: "Bayonèt se fè, konstitisyon se papye," roughly translated as "might makes right."

Like the narcissist, as a group we seem to strive for special treatment, suggesting a pervasive underlying desire to appear smarter, better, or bigger than the other person. "Fairness," in other words, "equality before the law is for the other guy, not for me." This suggests that the problem is not the constitutions but our collective inability as of yet to respect our words and to live by the ideals to which we aspire. It seems to me that we want privileges without any attached responsibilities. We do not want our actions to have any negative consequences and appear to live in a state of false appearance and pathological denial when in Haiti.

We call for an end to corruption, yet we tolerate, and even admire present and former corrupt officials in our midst, validating their sense of fraudulent entitlement. Other countries prosecute them. When did we ever credibly prosecute a former official for fraud, embezzlement, or outright theft? It happened only once in our history, and in the main textbook used to teach history in Haiti, it was downplayed as an insignificant event. In that trial called "Le procès de la consolidation," which occurred in 1904, both Haitian officials and their foreign partners were prosecuted, despite heavy pressure not to by the economic and political elite and the French and German governments. That trial showed that there is a moral fiber, although weak, that is part of our collective makeup. Alexandre Lilavois reflecting an indignant sense of outrage about the unexplained wealth of a number of government officials and National bank employees, in a series of articles written for "Le Nouvelliste" between 1902-05, lamented that "those who begged yesterday have become rich and insolent today." Could we not say the same about many of the newly rich in Haiti over the last 65 years? Of note, because it reveals the extent to which our moral values are anemic and the power of corruption to corrode morality and decency, three of the convicted rascals, Cincinatus Leconte, Trançrède Auguste and Vilbrun Guillaume Sam became president within ten years of their convictions.

"SÒTT KI BAY, ENBESIL KI PA PRAN"

What do I call for? An examination of our character, a critical analysis of our collective personality through a look at our individual actions. We need to analyze the effects of adages such as "Sòtt ki bay, enbesyl ki pa pran" and take another look at the cherished Malice and Bouki stories for their underlying messages. It is as though our actions belie an underlying culturally opportunistic morality that undermines fairness and erodes integrity. This needs to be replaced by one that is less self-focused and impregnated by the understanding that our freedom ends where the rights of the others start and vice versa.



Let us start by asking ourselves this question: in what way or ways have I contributed to maintaining corruption in Haiti? Have I ever intentionally benefited at the expense of another fellow Haitian? How often have I jumped the lines literally and figuratively? When you live in a culture of pervasive corruption and impunity, like in Haiti, you are predisposed to unconsciously act it out in your daily life. Neuroscience teaches us that the brain learns effortlessly what it experiences repetitively but requires sustained and focused effort to unlearn it.

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Turning my attention to a task over which I have a higher level of control: I want to tell you about our fourth publication. First and foremost, we want to introduce Ms. Marie-Christine Theodore, our new Layout Editor, and thank her for her generosity and kindness for throwing us the life-saving branch that made this publication possible. A big thank you goes to Ms. Réjane Pierre for shepherding us through the last two issues. Réjane, with deep feelings of gratitude, we wish you good health and continued success in all your endeavors.

LCS is attracting new members and growing. We have the pleasure of introducing you to three bold new L'Ouverturians who have agreed to share with us their reason for joining it. From Dr. Raynald Altema you will get a glimpse of the way two illustrious outsiders looked at Haiti in the 19th century. It is a really good read at a time when there are talks of referendum and changing the constitution in Haiti. You will find a summary of a rigorously documented, insightful and informative presentation on the roles of women and girls in the struggle against slavery in St. Domingue. Ms. Jane Marcel shares with us her opinion as to why a young Haitian American boy, on the way to school, suddenly stopped to pay homage to the Haitian flag.

As usual please go to our Community News and Events section for an update on future programming and for information on social service agencies.

Thank you for your attention and happy reading!

Jean-Claude Dutès, Ph.D./LP
Clinical Neuropsychologist
Associate Graduate Faculty Professor
College of Nursing
Florida Atlantic University



MEET OUR NEW MEMBERS!

Ms. Astrid Williams, PT
Owner of KAT Physical Therapy and
Rehabilitation
LCS Member



Someone referred to good health care services as “adding years to life.” That is how I like to think of my role as a service provider. Nothing brings me greater satisfaction than hearing my

patients telling me their pain is gone, no greater delight than watching a person once immobile take their first step despite pain and no greater joy than a person being able to return to work or to their favorite activity having regained or improved their functional ability.

Pursuing my dream of being a healthcare provider started when I decided to become a Physical Therapist. I attended SUNY Downstate Medical Center, graduating with the class of 1998. Over the years, I have worked at St. Luke’s Roosevelt hospital rotating between their acute care, inpatient, and outpatient rehab departments. In Virginia Beach, I further honed my skills at the Sentara Leigh Healthcare System, working in home health and in the Orthopedic Section of Leigh Memorial Hospital. After my move to Florida in 2007, I accepted a position as Director of an outpatient physical therapy clinic, and eventually became Director of Rehab (DOR) at a Skilled Nursing Facility. In 2015, I opted to go into business for myself and that decision gave birth to KAT Physical Therapy, an outpatient clinic in West Palm

Beach.

Having left Haiti at the age of 8, I fondly recall my formative years in Jacmel, never realizing the strong impact of those years on my subconscious. In Elmhurst, Queens, I found a group of like-minded Haitians who, had also fled the Duvalier regime, and we formed a tight-knit community of ex-patriates. We listened to Haitian music, as well as American, and attended a Haitian church. Although I strongly identify with my country of origin, I realized that I did not know enough about its history. Over the years, my interest in discovering my roots deepened and I developed a thirst for knowledge regarding Haiti. I had heard of Toussaint, Dessalines, Christophe, etc. but did not know who they were and how they changed the course of history, taking it for granted that the past has nothing to do with my present or future. However, that is wrong; the past does dictate my future and, I determine how. That is why I joined the Louverture Cultural Society. It is a means of reconnecting with my culture and determining how I can make a positive difference in our future as a collective.

Mr. Darwin Etienne
Owner of the Facebook page Positive Haiti
LCS Member



Hi,
 My name is Darwin Etienne. I was born and raised in Montreal, Canada but spent more than half of my life in Toronto

where I currently reside.



I am the founder of Positive Haiti, which is a Destination Marketing Private Organization. My mission is to present Haiti as a valid vacation destination.

We fight the negative imagery that has been perpetrated by the media throughout the years by presenting images of unknown parts of the island.

The reason why I joined The Louverture Cultural Society as a member is because I recognize the common mission of dignifying our country with information about our contribution to humanity.

The second reason of course is that: *L'Union fait la force!*

The Facebook page for Positive Haiti is: <https://www.facebook.com/positivehaiti>

Thank you,
Darwin Etienne

Ms. Yoly Bazile
MPA, CHC
LCS Member



I have been involved in healthcare for more than fifteen years. I earned a master's degree in Public & Healthcare Administration from Long Island University and a Bachelor of the Arts from Bernard M. Baruch College, in New York. Work Experience includes Managed Care, Corporate, Compliance and Employee & Patient Engagement.

While working at Cornell Cooperative Extension, I earned a Commercial and Non-Profit Energy Auditing certification from New York State Energy Office. I also hold a certification in Healthcare Compliance.

My work for the Commonwealth Fund "*The Role of WIC Centers and Small Business in Enrolling Uninsured Children in Medicaid and Child Health Plus*" was published in 2000.

Why I became an LCS member? To say in the know and grow!

Growing up in Haiti, the method of studying was "par coeur"; you memorized your lessons to recite and not taking the time to analyze the content. Not given much thought to what I was reciting, so long as the words were flowing in a rhythmic pattern, I was guaranteed an "A". Fast forward to being an adult, LCS has given me the opportunity to review, analyze and understand important personalities and events in Haitian History. I have always been proud of my heritage, but now I am discovering fascinating historical facts (women participation in the freedom struggle) on Haitian history, thus satisfying my intellectual appetite.

LCS's presentations and webinars are on point and relevant to today's issues, e.g., the pieces on Mental Health and the presentation on Haitian Independence Day "*Soup Joumou.*" I immensely enjoyed those presentations. The articles in the newsletter are informative, educational, and enlightening.

Yes, I am a proud member of Louverture Cultural Society.



JUNE 2021 WEBMINAR

“REJOICE, YOUR WOMB WILL NOT BEGET SLAVES”!

*“Roles of Women in
Haiti’s Struggles for
Freedom and
Independence”*

Crystal N. Eddins, PhD
Department of Africana Studies, UNC Charlotte
L’Ouverture Cultural Society
May 18, 2021

Right: Sanité Belair on the Haitian *goude*s currency



By Jean-Claude Dutès, Ph.D

Always on the cutting edge, making inroads into the untrodden field, the L’ouverture Cultural Society celebrated the anniversary of the creation of the Haitian flag with a webinar on the roles of women and girls in the struggle for independence.

Most of us have heard of Toussaint, Dessalines, Pétion, and so on. But how many of you have heard of Charlotte Papillon and Magdeleine? Fortunately, the silence is starting to break. Professor Phillip T. Tucker recently published books about Sanite Belair, Marie Jeanne Lamartinière and Gran Toya, and the Haitian government paid homage to Lieutenant Belair in 2004 by printing her

picture on Haiti’s currency. In this webinar, we learn about new personalities without leaving out those more well-known such as Cecile Fatiman, Claire Heureuse Félicité Dessalines and Défilé Basile.

Professor Crystal Eddins first introduced us to the situation in St Domingue in late 1700’s. Of 12 million Africans who were imported, about 800,000 were sold in St. Domingue. Women constituted a little less than 50% of the enslaved population. Most the imported Africans came from West Central Africa and the Bight of Benin.



Who were these women?



"Seh-Dong-Hong-Beh," one of Dahomey's 'Amazon' women soldiers, <http://slaveryimages.org/s/slaveryimages/item/2623>

Before being captured and sold into bondage, they were soldiers, queens and queen mothers, healers, and agriculturalists. They brought their culture with them along with skills that they used to resist servitude and fight for freedom. In St. Domingue, they worked as agriculturalists, Vodou priestesses and healers, and served as nurses, spiritual guides, spies, and liaisons before and during the struggle. They have also been described as labor protestors, organizing protests for better work conditions, as they did most the field labor while the men were enrolled in the rebel armies.

It appears that women worked as liaisons between different rebel armies or groups. An African woman named Charlotte Papillon, who was married to Jean-Francois Papillon, has been documented to engage in extensive

travels making contacts with slaves from different plantations just before the outbreak of the rebellion in August of 1791.

Historical records reveal that another African woman named Magdeleine escaped from her plantation and was involved in spying activities and arms purchases. Many of you have already heard of Cecile Fatiman, the Mambo at the center of the events of the Bois Caiman congress. Priestess like Fatiman also played a significant role that I was not aware of before taking part in the webinar. We often hear that the rebel soldiers did not believe bullets could kill them and that they were nothing but dust. Vodou priestesses like Fatiman were the ones who prepared the talisman or charms that empowered these soldiers. In my language, they were war/freedom psychologists. Through their work they motivated, supported, and empowered the average African soldier to perform feats beyond their enemies' imagination.

The African women also fought slavery by taking control of their bodies and resisting attempts by the masters to transform their bodies into means of producing more slaves. Many women escaped, joining maroon groups both as a way to seek their freedom but also as a mean for taking control over their sexuality and reproductive functions. In 1802, An African mother and her two daughters who were about to be shot by French soldiers for their participation in revolutionary activities admonished the crying girls: "Rejoice, your wombs will not beget slaves."

Through the story of Dédée "Defilé-La-Folle" Bazile, Professor Eddins brought into focus the pernicious psychological cost of slavery and of the effects of multiple severed



Image: by Lionel St. Eloi, via www.haitianartsociety.org

relationships. We learned that Dede's behavior changed after she lost three sons and two brothers fighting for the revolutionary army. Clearly, in today's language, Dede probably had a severe case of complicated grief mixed with features of a post-traumatic stress disorder. Yet, despite this, she was the lucid one, the one to show her courage after the death of Dessalines, for at the time it was a dangerous thing to show any kind of sympathy for the assassinated emperor. Restoring his shattered dignity, she collected the pieces left of his mutilated body and gave him as decent a burial as her means would allow.

There is more. I have given you just a taste. The whole webinar is available on LCS's Face Book page. What are you waiting for? Go view it now, well not at this instant! Wait after you finish reading this newsletter, of course. Be generous, share it with all of your friends, even with people you do not like or those who do not think like you. It is high time the veil is removed from the historic deeds of Haitian women and girls!

The full presentation of the webinar can be viewed on our YouTube channel => [here](#)

**LIBERTÉ
OU LA MORT**



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HAITIAN FLAG DAY: MEANING AND CELEBRATIONS



By Jane Marcel

My intent in writing this piece is to try to explain the reason why our Haitian students are so thrilled to celebrate May 18th, or Haitian Flag Day. With great delights, they wear bicolor attires depicting their flag, doing so, most of the time, in defiance of their schools' regulations. Punishment does not alter their willingness to showcase the meaning of that day.

Nowadays, a researcher only must search google to get the information that they need. So, most of my information, in addition to what I learned in childhood from my Haitian history book, was updated by Google. From my research, I learned that "The flag is the symbol of a nation, a signaling device that identifies a nation".



Patricia Brikle, 'Catherine Flon' www.fanmrebel.com

If you ask any Haitian how the flag was created, without hesitation they will tell you: on May 18, 1803, at the Congress in Arcahaie, the General-in-Chief Jean-Jacques Dessalines took a French flag, ripped, and discarded the white stripe and handed it to Catherine Flon, a relative, to sew it. The blue represents the



black skin and the red, the “mulattoes” or the people born mostly of mixed African and European ancestry. The flag was a representation of the union of the Blacks and the mulattoes, and a symbol of the desire of the people of Haiti to live free or die. Many Haitians would add that is why Capois La Mort, at the peril of his life and that of his troops refused to back down after his horse was hit and his hat flown away by bullets. So fierce was his offense on French lines and so bold his attacks on their positions at Vertières, the last battle of the independence war, the French General Rochambeau, briefly ceased the hostilities to congratulate him for his bravery.

The battle of Vertières ended the colonization of Haiti with the surrendering of the powerful French Army of Napoleon Bonaparte to a unified group of bands of slaves and or former slaves. It represents a rallying force, an expression of freedom from tyranny.



The flag had undergone several transformations over the years: blue changed to black and the layout of the stripes from vertical to horizontal. The founder of the nation had replaced the blue stripe to black signifying Liberty or Death.

We owe the current design to President Alexandre Pétiion, who in 1806, after the reign of emperor Jean-Jacques Dessalines,

the father of the nation, restored the blue and red flag, laying it out horizontally, the blue over the red, and placing at the center on a square piece of white cloth the coat of arms of the Republic.

We are proud to see the flag being hoisted on a mast. What a wonderful sight to see the Haitian Flag hovering over the crowd, carried by Haitians or non-Haitians, who took to the streets during the Black Lives Matter demonstrations and rallies that shook the United States and several cities around the world during the summer of 2020.

As I asked at the beginning: why do so many young Haitians born outside of Haiti fervently celebrate Haitian Flag Day or Haitian Heritage Day? Why are they so enthusiastic about their Haitian Heritage? Is it the colorful displays or the celebrations of the day, or is it the meaningful idea that slaves have conquered the masters? I am not too sure about the latter because they had not studied it in school like I did. How, we do not know, but we have learned to respect the raising of the flag. This is engraved in the memory of most Haitian parents.

Haitians, in general, believe that the flag is the soul of the nation. It is the symbol of a successful historical past; a pride that is anchored inside each one of them. It is so much so, that celebrating Flag Day on May 18, 2013, or 2014, Haitian and City leaders assembled for the occasion witnessed a kid, on his way to school, stop at the sound of the National Anthem. He must have been 9 years old. He resumed his steps when the singing stopped, and the flag had reached the top of the mast. The flag was raised by a proud firefighter of Haitian descent at the City Hall of Boynton Beach with all the highlights possible.



How in the world that kid know he had to stop?

I remembered as a kid, walking to school, in Haiti, life completely standing still at eight o'clock in the morning at the raising of the flag. No car moved. No one walked. Drivers stopped their cars and got off to salute the flag. At the time, a driver caught moving his car or any one seen walking was committing a violation punishable by law.



www.restavekfreedom.org

What Spartacus may have lacked during his revolt, was the spiritual vision of freedom for all the slaves, the power that comes from the meeting of the souls behind one objective: victory over tyranny. The Providence had put great men like Toussaint Louverture, Jean Jacques Dessalines, Capois La Mort, Alexandre Pétion, and others, together, to accomplish the greatest act of unity that is "United we are strong". And in doing so, Haitians had become the citizens of the world and symbol of freedom. It is so much so, that last summer, Haitian flags floated at the rallies for racial justice among the protesters.

The Haitian flag represents the mixing of the blood of people who had originated from different countries of Africa and Europe who were either forced to or had freely come to Haiti. Contemplating the coat of arms, and

including the blue and red stripes, all the colors of the rainbow are manifest in the flag.

It is the true spirit of the symbol of the United Nations Organization. It is powerful.

Coat of arms of the republic

The coat of arms of the Republic is at the center of the flag. On a square white cloth, are displayed a Phrygian hat (liberty cap) on top of a palm tree, six blue and red flags, canons, bayonets, drums and other items of wars, and a trophy with the legend In Unity there is strength.



Below is a copy of a mural, painted right after the death of George Floyd, displayed in Canarsie, Brooklyn. It exemplifies the standing of our ancestors: "Freedom for all".





HISTORY CORNER

HAÏTI, VUE PAR DEUX AMIS AU DIX-NEUVIEME SIECLE.

Par Reynald Altéma, MD



De nos jours, notre pays de naissance est reconnu comme un échec presque au même niveau que la Somalie où il existe un gouvernement démissionnaire, incapable d'assurer la sécurité et le fonctionnement normal des institutions publiques/privées et les chefs de gangs qui contrôlent les quartiers et les différentes zones. La seule différence chez nous est l'existence d'un seul président, mais l'ineptie est similaire. Le grand malheur réside dans le fait que ce pays a eu dans le temps une renommée extraordinaire, attirant les fondateurs de nation, produisant des hommes de lettres de réputation internationale et retenant un certain cachet de la terre des libres, ouverte aux opprimés tels les anciens esclaves des États-Unis d'Amérique, aidant ceux qui luttèrent pour leur liberté dans le Nouveau Monde, qu'ils fussent les Cubains contre les Espagnols, les Grecs contre les Turques, les Vénézuéliens contre les Espagnols, des Européens contre les nazis. Dans le cas des Européens, la contribution des Haïtiens s'est manifestée par le sang versé et des vies perdues sans

nécessairement recevoir un geste de reconnaissance pour cette accolade.

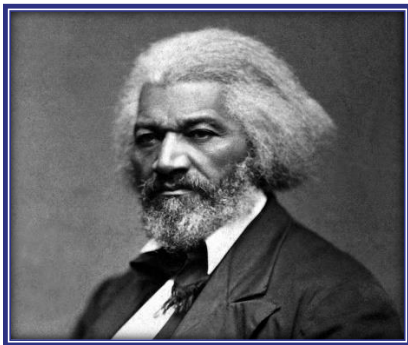
Le séjour d'un émissaire, d'un fameux émigré dans l'histoire furent des occasions uniques d'une publicité pour les aspects positifs d'un système. On peut citer Jefferson et sa visite en France et de Tocqueville qui en 1835 a écrit un panégyrique sur les États-Unis. Un passage intéressant dans le premier tome, « Aux États-Unis, ce sont les gens modérés dans leurs désirs qui s'engagent au milieu des détours dans la politique. Les grands talents ...s'écartent en général du pouvoir, afin de poursuivre la richesse. C'est à ces causes autant qu'aux mauvais choix de la démocratie qu'il faut attribuer le grand nombre d'hommes vulgaires qui occupent les fonctions. » Il n'y a pas de référence à l'esclavage, à l'exclusion des femmes et des noirs au suffrage universel, mais il vante le système.

Dans notre cas, nous ne fûmes pas si chanceux ; à partir de cette date, nous dûmes attendre encore un autre quart de siècle avant la reconnaissance de notre



indépendance par les États-Unis d'Amérique. L'affront de 1804 se plaçait sur le fond d'un paysage où le lynchage physique ou moral contre les noirs se faisait dans le quotidien.

L'anathème d'anciens esclaves prenant leur destinée en main méritait d'être effacé. Pour ce faire, plusieurs visiteurs biaisés avaient écrit des rapports négatifs sur notre pays avec une exagération inouïe parce qu'ils cherchaient des preuves supportant leurs points de vue de supériorité raciale. Cela se comprend, car l'épopée de 1804 a toujours été très indigeste pour un grand nombre de personnes, qu'elles l'avouent ou non. Ainsi l'arrivée de Frederick Douglass en octobre 1889 sous l'administration du président Harrison, comme ambassadeur/consul américain en Haïti fut l'équivalent de la manne tombée du ciel, en théorie de part et d'autre, à cause de l'admiration mutuelle. Deux contes de fées se rencontraient : un ancien esclave devenu l'un des plus grands orateurs du siècle visitant la première nation du Nouveau Monde créée par des esclaves. De surcroît, il avait en face de lui un homologue du même calibre intellectuel dans la personne de Firmin.



Frederick Douglass

Cependant, il fut chargé d'une mission difficile : le droit d'un port naval au Môle St Nicolas pour le ravitaillement en charbon. En Haïti, l'idée de l'emphytéose pour l'étranger

a toujours été un sujet tabou, pour des raisons historiques. L'expression populaire, *vann peyi*, a une connotation très péjorative et double comme une injure ; sa commission est reconnue comme un suicide politique. L'antécédent à cette mission en lui-même est révélateur de la dynamique en jeu. En effet, le secrétaire d'État américain, Blaine, avait demandé au président Légitime non seulement l'accès au port, mais le droit d'utiliser des diplomates américains auprès des pays d'Europe pour représenter les intérêts haïtiens. Le mot offensif ne ferait pas justice à une telle insulte. Le jeu malin s'est poursuivi en aidant le général Hyppolite dans son insurrection contre Légitime et en lui fournissant des armes par un marchand américain; Firmin avait fait partie de cette transaction. Donc l'obtention du port fut le *quid pro quo* tacite selon le côté américain. Douglass fut mis dans la position délicate de formuler une position presque à contrecœur, car les documents offerts parlaient d'un droit « conféré par le destin » pour le port naval. Sa position fut encore plus intenable parce qu'un amiral, Bancroft Gherardi, reçut le mandat de plénipotentiaire pour les négociations et Douglass eut un rôle secondaire plusieurs mois après son arrivée au pays. Cet amiral était arrogant et ne tenait pas compte des sensibilités locales. Bien que Firmin fût un membre de l'insurrection, il eut assez de probité, de sagacité, et d'étoffe pour refuser-ce qui ne se fait pas de nos jours- à cette demande coercitive, car les navires américains étaient visibles dans la rade. Naturellement, l'échec de cette négociation fut mis sur le compte de Douglass, qui fut critiqué par certains journalistes américains d'avoir trop de sympathie pour les Haïtiens ou accusé d'incompétence à cause de sa race.² Loin de faire un recul ou de prendre une couverture diplomatique, Douglass a accepté comme un badge d'honneur son



penchement vers notre pays même s'il fut déçu de sa gouvernance. Il n'a pas marchandé son amitié pour Haïti et a accepté de la représenter pendant l'Exposition mondiale colombienne tenue à Chicago en 1893 à l'occasion du quatre centième anniversaire de la découverte de l'Amérique par Colomb. Dans son autobiographie qu'il a actualisée après sa démission de son poste en Haïti en juin 1891, il a commis les trois derniers chapitres comme un plaidoyer pour notre pays.

Comme vu plus haut, les puissances étrangères ont toujours tiré avantage de la précarité de l'économie, de l'instabilité politique intermittente et des luttes incessantes entre les frères d'une même nation pour influencer la bascule. Elles avaient toutes fait la remarque de notre tendance pernicieuse à régler nos différends par la violence. Ces luttes avaient de plus en plus des protagonistes tels les commerçants étrangers, grands fournisseurs d'armes attisant le feu. La théorie des héros créant une nation en pleine éclosion se heurtait contre la réalité d'une terre en guerre avec elle-même, en effervescence plutôt qu'en épanouissement. En laissant la pauvreté pulluler, le développement économique était devenu une victime par l'inattention accordée au niveau trop bas de la scolarité et du secteur agricole. Le pays ne faisait pas partie des grandes percées qui se faisaient à travers le monde. La révolution industrielle, le système bancaire, les découvertes et les recherches scientifiques appartenaient aux autres. Nous étions en retard à cause de notre isolement choisi. Douglass en faisait allusion en parlant de « La vapeur, l'électricité, l'esprit d'initiative...peuvent nous unir dans une fraternité universelle. » Il était alors un vieillard, mais il restait toujours un sage, un intellectuel et à jamais notre ami.

Son rôle dans notre histoire est digne de plus d'appréciation.



José Martí

Un autre cas de visite par un ami fut celui du révolutionnaire José Martí, un Cubain blanc. Il avait vécu aux États-Unis pendant de longues années parmi les exilés cubains et avait une amertume contre la pratique du laissez-faire et le racisme des blancs contre les noirs. Écrivain, journaliste, lutteur politique, il fut un sympathisant. Il a visité le pays à trois reprises entre le 9 septembre 1892 et le mois de février 1895, faisant la navette entre Montecristi en République Dominicaine et Haïti. Il a habité à Cap-Haïtien chaque fois pendant sa quête d'armes pour la lutte d'indépendance de son pays.



La photo d'en haut fut la dernière demeure où il a résidé. L'immeuble est toujours présent et contient sa photo au rez-de-chaussée (on peut aisément aller sur YouTube et voir une vidéo en espagnol faite par les Cubains qui montrent cette maison et sa propriétaire). Il avait pris beaucoup de notes et avait déterminé que l'expérience de



Cuba devrait être différente pour éviter l'échec d'Haïti. Il a observé que c'était le résultat du manque de réflexion et d'élaboration d'un projet de société, basé sur l'harmonie entre les différents groupes, avant et pendant la lutte de l'indépendance. Il a conclu que l'isolement du pays, l'aspect racial de la lutte furent des entraves, mais il parla de sa déception des dirigeants. Martí fut vivement déçu du manque d'épanouissement à l'échelle individuelle aussi bien que nationale. Tandis qu'à Cuba on avait des institutions telles que l'Université de La Havane, prodiguant la connaissance, Haïti n'avait pas une équivalence. Il parla de l'obscurantisme pervers et de la pauvreté ambiante en des termes vifs, mais pénibles, embarrassants il faut l'admettre, avec le sous-entendu, pourquoi une telle issue après un si bel acte de bravoure ? Ces réflexions sont éparpillées à travers ses multiples publications, *Obras* et ses articles publiés dans les journaux *Patria* et *Nación* durant son passage aux États-Unis. Cependant une source facile à vérifier est une thèse écrite par Armanda Lewis et disponible sur le web.

Pourtant, son expérience ne fut pas seulement négative. L'hospitalité généreuse du peuple l'avait touché. Il a rencontré Anténor Firmin qui l'a impressionné, car il parlait l'espagnol couramment et était une sommité intellectuelle. Dans son livre, *Les Lettres de Saint Thomas*, Firmin fait mention de cette correspondance qu'il entretenait avec lui.

Le terme obscurantisme est fort et peut piquer la sensibilité patriotique de certains, mais beaucoup de faits ne font que supporter ce jugement de valeur.



Université Anténor Firmin du Cap-Haïtien

Comment s'imaginer qu'un illustre citoyen comme Anténor Firmin qui avait vécu à Cap-Haïtien et qui a écrit un remarquable manifeste pour la défense des noirs, un véritable livre de chevet pour tous, soit récompensé par notre société en laissant sa maison en état de délabrement, et les fenêtres barricadées par des briques ? Cette maison dans tout autre pays serait un joyau historique bien maintenu, avec des reliques comme ses livres, ses articles, etc., attirant les touristes, les élèves, et serait considérée et entretenue comme une source de fierté nationale ! La Jamaïque, l'île voisine, le fait pour Bob Marley et Marcus Garvey.



José Martí square au Cap-Haïtien

Un buste à l'honneur de José Martí fut finalement érigé en 2014, cependant il fut payé par Cuba. **C'est gênant !!!!** On parle parfois parmi les Cubains d'utiliser sa dernière demeure comme un musée ; cela se



ferait si seulement les Cubains payaient pour le faire. Nous n'accordons pas d'importance aux héros et monuments historiques.

Quel autre mot peut expliquer l'insistance sur la fermeture des classes pendant cette période de manifestations ?

Ce qui blesse le plus est le fait que la notion de création d'une nation au bénéfice de ses habitants reste toujours une idée étrange parmi les dirigeants. Personne ne détient la solution de l'imbroglio actuel, cela doit être clair. Nous avons eu notre trop-plein de faux prophètes. L'autocritique est nécessaire, la

connaissance de l'histoire aidera. Au lieu de réinventer la roue, il faut calquer les solutions trouvées dans les situations similaires, et par-dessus tout, il faut changer la mentalité rapace des serviteurs publics à partir de la tête. Les positions partisans ont toujours nui et sèment la division. Pour une fois, considérons l'échec de notre pays comme l'ennemi commun parce que nous avons l'habitude de resserrer les rangs contre un même adversaire pour plus tard nous tourner l'un contre l'autre. Si l'échec devient l'épée de Damoclès, peut-être l'union règnera.



Références

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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 Comeau, 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>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. •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 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>MEALS ON WHEELS SOUTH FLORIDA In partnership with the Area Agency on Aging and Elder Affairs Provide & deliver healthy meals & nutrition education</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>MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING FOR PROBLEMS RELATED TO COVID-19 https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline</p>
<p>COVID-19 INFORMATION</p> <p>TESTING SITES http://discover.pbcbgov.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>VOTER'S RESTORATION</p> <p>For assistance with voter's restoration rights, call (877) 698-6830 or contact FRRRC at Floridarrc.com.</p> <p>A pro bono attorney also will help the individual with fees owed to the office clerks.</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>



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SCHEDULE OF UPCOMING

EVENTS

SAVE-THE-DATE

DATE	LOCATION	TIME	EVENT
08/21/2021	Webinar / on ZOOM	7:00 PM	<p>The day the Haitian revolution started: August 21, 1791.</p> <p>Historical research reveals that several factors contributed to the eruption of the slave rebellion. In addition to the chaotic environment that prevailed at the time, there was significant preparation by slaves Leaders and formerly enslaved blacks. This presentation will discuss and highlight the key factors that ignited the Haitian revolution.</p> <p>Guest Speaker: Jean-Claude Dutès, Ph.D.</p>
10/2021	Webinar / on ZOOM	TBD	<p>Reflections on the life of Jean-Jacques Dessalines.</p> <p>Emperor Jean Jacques Dessalines was a man with a very complex personality. For 40 years after his death, it was illegal to mention his name in Haiti. This presentation will discuss the controversies surrounding his rule and the effects of his legacy on the nascent nation.</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>Of the four main founding fathers, President Pétion was the only one who died a conventional death. Founder of the republic, co-creator of the Haitian flag, he remains an enigma. This presentation will review his rule, controversies surrounding it, and the effects of his legacy on Haitian political culture.</p> <p>Guest Speaker: Jean-Claude Dutès, Ph.D.</p>
12/2021	Webinar / on ZOOM	TBD	<p>Haiti and the diaspora: a difficult dance.</p> <p>Guest Speakers: Dr. Guylaine L. Richard & Ms. Jocelyne Cameau</p> <p>More information will be provided by mid-November.</p>



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