In Solidarity with the Faculty and University Students of Haiti

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

Weeks after the devastating earthquake that wreaked havoc in the country, the people of Haiti are still struggling to survive. This terrible catastrophe has affected every family in the country one way or another but some more than others. When the earth shook in the country’s capital on January 12, 2010 at 5 PM, many university students were in class or about to start their study. Given the demographics of the country and the availability of resources to teach at the university level, it is a fact that most students and professionals who are interested in pursuing an academic degree attend schools in the evening. As a result most of the universities were bustling with students when the killer quake hit the country.

The Haitian Studies Association has received reports from its associated partners in Haiti relating the devastating impact of the quake on the academic community. We are very saddened by the death of Pierre Vernet, an eminent linguist who spent his entire life at the Linguistic faculty, training young scholars in the languages of Africa and the world. In addition to Professor Vernet, we are saddened to learn that Professor George Anglade, an eminent Haitian Geographer, also passed away in the earthquake along with his wife. It is impossible for us here to list all the faculty and students that have perished in the quake. In addition to the destruction of human lives, the physical facilities of the University system were completely destroyed. Several local and foreign media reported that more than 90% of the school’s buildings were destroyed in the earthquake. The University of Quisqueya which had just built a brand new $2 million dollar campus was completely wiped out by the earthquake. Not only all the buildings were destroyed, but the Provost watched as several students in the buildings were crushed to death. Fondwa University, outside of the City of Jacmel, was completely leveled. In addition to the schools, Haiti also lost several libraries that were the repository of the country’s national treasure, its patrimony.

The country was already lacking in infrastructure thus the overwhelming destruction of the remaining buildings have further devastated the capacity of the government and the private sector to educate the population. This deficit will further contribute to a shortage of qualified teachers and professionals to address the reconstruction needs of the country.

The Haitian Studies Association wishes to express its deepest sympathy to all the members of the academic community that have been severely affected by the earthquake and calls on all our friends and colleagues abroad and in the Diaspora to help Haiti restore its academic system.

In solidarity,

The Haitian Studies Association Board of Directors

For more information please contact the Haitian Studies of Association at HSA@umb.edu or visit our website www.HaitianStudies.umb.edu.