THE HAITIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION

The Haitian Studies Association (HSA) is a tax-exempt educational organization. HSA promotes research on Haiti and Haitians, identifies and disseminates information on Haiti, and has an international network of competent experts to address Haitian issues, both from disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives. HSA serves as a resource for various institutions and policy makers in and out of Haiti, encourages discussion and debate on all aspects of Haitian society in Haiti and in the diaspora. HSA seeks to foster linkages and working relationships with educational, research, and civic institutions in Haiti.

Membership in the association is open to all persons interested in advancing its goals and objectives, regardless of ideological persuasion, ethnic origin, occupation, residence, gender, or academic discipline. HSA is led by a Steering Committee which is responsible for establishing the organizations' policies and orientation.

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HSA/AHAD Annual Meeting

The Eleventh Annual Meeting
Haitian Studies Association (HSA)

The Sixth Annual Meeting / The Association for Haitian American Development (AHAD)

Theme: Bridges Across the Waters: Connecting the Haitian Communities at Home and Abroad

The concerns of the Haitian communities both in Haiti and in the diaspora have become transnational in nature. The conference, held in Atlanta November 4-7, explored many of the conflicting issues and challenges affecting the Haitian communities at home and abroad.

Serge Declama, president of AHAD and Leslie Demangles, Site Committee Chair and Past President, HSA.

Freeman Wins Award

Dr. Bryant Freeman received an award for his contributions in promoting Haitian Kreyol from the Ambassador of the United States to Haiti. The special ceremony was held on the lawn of the American Residence in Bourdon on July 5, 1997, by the Honorable William Lacy Swing. The award was presented to Dr. Freeman along with HSA and members of HSA for contributions to various academic and artistic endeavors. These award winners were announced in the last issue of the newsletter. Dr. Freeman's award was accidentally left out.
Haitian Wins National Arts Award

Washington, DC - Today, the National Endowment for the Arts announced the recipients of the 1999 National Heritage Fellowships, the country’s most prestigious honor in the folk and traditional arts. Thirteen fellowships, which include a one-time award of $10,000 each, will be presented to artists in twelve different states.

Among those chosen are a gospel singer from North Carolina, an Irish musician living in Pennsylvania, a Native American storyteller from North Dakota, a basketmaker from California, an Ozark fiddler, and a master boat builder from Maine. These performers and craftspeople, who represent a rich cross-section of America’s many cultures, are honored for their achievements as artists, teachers, innovators, and guardians of traditional art forms. Since 1982, the Endowment has awarded over 222 National Heritage Fellowships. An awards ceremony and concert featuring the honorees will be held this fall in Washington, D.C.

Bill Ivey, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts and a folklorist, said, "The Arts Endowment’s National Heritage Fellows are outstanding artists and individuals who have dedicated their lives to preserving, reviving and celebrating this country’s living cultural heritage. By proudly honoring their many contributions to music, dance, storytelling, and the creation of functional items of beauty, we also pay homage to the communities that have inspired and nurtured their work.”

Frisner Augustin: Haitian Drummer, Brooklyn, New York — is a master drummer, teacher, organizer, and cultural advocate who has become a principal musical ambassador of Haitian culture in the United States. With his group La Troupe Makandal, he has toured Latin America, the Caribbean, and many prestigious sites in the United States, including Yale University Lincoln Center, and the Apollo Theatre. Through his teaching at Columbia University, the Caribbean Cultural Center, and New York University, and with four commercial recordings, he proudly preserves Haitian cultural traditions.

KOSANBA
Congress of Santa Barbara (A scholarly Association for the Study of Haitian Vodun)

At the urging of five members of the Board of Directors residents in Haiti, KOSANBA wishes to announce that Colloquium III that was to be held in Port-au-Prince, at the end of December, 1999 has been postponed sine die.

KOSANBA regrets any hardship that this may cause its members and scholars who were to present at this conference. We were urged to postpone due to the uncertainty in the political situation at that time of the year.

We shall, however, convene at Trinity College, in Hartford, Connecticut, under the eegis of the Department of Religion, on March 22nd and 23rd, 2000.

We are re-opening the file on the submission of proposals. Please send a one-page abstract in triplicate by the new deadline of January 1st, 2000 c/o Conference Committee, at the address below. Mesi anpil/Thank you.

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(Vice President, KOSANBA)
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1492: le viol du Nouveau Monde; un nouveau regard sur la colonisation et ses conséquences désastreuses

Par Marc Loiseau*

En 1992, l'Europe, l'Amérique et particulièrement le Vatican commémoreront grandiosement et avec enthousiasme le cinquantième anniversaire de ce qu'on appelle par un légitimant euphémisme la "Découverte du Nouveau Monde". L'atmosphère de fête qui régnait en ce jour voilait en fait une sombre tragédie vieille de cinq siècles dont les Européens et leurs descendants essaient d'en diminuer la portée.

Face à cette attitude, un groupe d'universitaires, de journalistes et d'écrivains décident qu'il était temps de crier la vérité à la face du monde. Il fallait, sans verser dans le révisionnisme, interpréter enfin l'histoire des Amérindiens et des Africains, non d'un point de vue eurocentrique - qui les présenta comme des sauvages, des êtres inférieurs - mais de façon plus objective, plus humaine, plus près de la vérité. Car il ne fait aucun doute que ceux qui habiteront un monde non représenté dans la géographie de Ptolémée étaient des êtres humains aussi complexes que les Européens. Pour accomplir cette tâche, Franz Antoine Leconte, Frantz Balthazar, Eddy Mésidor, Jean Elie Barjon, Eddy Magloire, Etienne Télimaque, Gérard Alphonse Férère et Marc A. Christophe ont passé des mois dans les bibliothèques et les musées pour écrire un ouvrage qui, selon la vision de Howard Zinn dans A People's History of the United States, raconte enfin l'histoire du point de vue des Amérindiens et des esclaves africains. Ce livre titré 1492: le viol du Nouveau Monde "est essentiellement écrit en l'honneur des déshérités d'aujourd'hui, des oubliés de l'Histoire et des victimes de la modernité depuis 1492" (1492: le viol du Nouveau Monde, p 9).

Dans le texte d'introduction titré Nouvelles perspectives à la Renaissance: l'ivresse de la conquête, Franz Antoine Leconte s'est évertué à faire une mise en cause de cette prétendue découverte. Se basant sur des faits historiques, il a parlé des échanges biologiques, botaniques et épidémiologiques entre les Européens et les Amérindiens. Leconte a aussi mis l'accent sur l'apport africain aux civilisations précolombiennes que l'historien Ivan Van Sertima dans They Came Before Columbus (Ils y étaient avant Colomb), aidé d'une documentation a établi au-delà de tout doute, Franz Antoine Leconte nous met aussi en garde contre le "virus de l'interprétation occidentale traditionnelle qui sait inventer sans cesse et de toute pièce, avec ses paramètres et ses canons spécifiques, le monde outrancièrement déformé et déshumanisé des autochtones".

L'Amérique avant Christophe Colomb, le premier chapitre du livre écrit par Frantz Balthazar fait la présentation des grandes cultures qui ont habité ce continent. Les Amérindiens étaient des artistes et architectes talentueux. Certains peuples, comme les Mayas par exemple, étaient de grands bâtisseurs, mathématiciens et astronautes. Ils étaient parvenus à se faire des tables que seul le calendrier grégorien, postérieur de quinze cents ans, a pu égaler! Mayas, Azteques, Incas, Apaches, Sémites... Les esclaves... ont construit des édifices et créé des œuvres d'art qui jusqu'à présent font l'étonnement des chercheurs. Toutes ces brillantes civilisations allaient connaître cependant des années sombres le jour fatidique où Christophe Colomb et ses hommes débarquent dans les Antilles à bord de leurs caravelles.


répond à cette question qui aujourd'hui encore est d'une brillante actualité.

1492: le viol du Nouveau Monde n'est pas un livre écrit dans l'intention de reviser l'Histoire, mais de l'enrichir, de la présenter d'un autre point de vue qui pendant longtemps a fait défaut dans les livres d'Histoire. "L'histoire de la conquête de l'Amérique n'est pas (seulement) celle de Christophe et de ses patrons les Souverains d'Espagne" écrit Jean Elie Barjon dans son essai L'autre visage de la Découverte, à la page 153. Barjon prouve la subjectivité et l'ethnocentrisme de l'historiographie en dénonçant l'odieux rationalisme de la colonisation. En effet, pendant des siècles et dans des centaines d'ouvrages, on a essayé de présenter 1492 comme l'année où l'Europe apporta la civilisation et les "vertus humaines" dans un monde sauvage peuplé de sauvages, un monde appelé l'Amérique. On nous a présenté la colonisation de l'Amérique comme une simple histoire entre le bien et le mal, la civilisation et la barbarie. Barjon, par une analyse rigoureuse appuyée de faits historiques, nous montre la fausseté de cette vision manichéiste de l'Histoire de la colonisation de l'Amérique.

Les conquérants étaient venus en Amérique d'abord pour s'enrichir. Il fallait, pour arriver à cette fin, déshumaniser les Amérindiens et dévaloriser leurs cultures. Les Espagnols, les premiers conquérants qui débarquèrent en Amérique utilisèrent les tortures et les massacres, mais surtout le viol pour arriver à leurs fins. Vaincre l'ennemi au combat n'est pas suffisant. Pour rendre la victoire complète, il faut lui prendre, souiller, violer, désacraliser ce qu'il a de plus cher: sa femme, sa compagne. Cette guerre psychologique sur laquelle peu d'historiens se sont penchés fait l'objet de l'essai de Étienne Télémaque titré La conquête de Quitueya la Belle: dimension psycho-sexuelle de l'événement. Télémaque dresse un réquisitoire d'ordre psychanalytique d'importance en éclairant la complexité du traumatisme durable qu'entraîne la violence sanction de l'illégal européen.

Les stratégies poursuivies par les Espagnols pour asservir les civilisations amérindiennes seront raflées par ceux qui les suivront en Amérique et en Afrique - Français, Belges, Anglais, Italiens, Portugais - et appliquées contre les esclaves africains. Dans ce cas, par quelle alchimie ces Africains, ces esclaves, transportés dans un monde étrange et d'étrangers, dans une ile dont ils ne connaissaient même pas le nom, ont-ils non seulement s'affranchirent mentalement de l'esclavage, mais leur lutter et vaincre leurs bourreaux? Marc A. Christophe dans son essai Colonisation, la réponse haitienne, répond à cette question qui jusqu'à présent ne cesse de troubler l'Occident. L'auteur analyse les aspects économiques, religieux et philosophiques de la geste haitienne comme réponse/rupture à l'esclavage colonial historique. Il démêle l'écheveau de cette rencontre de trois mondes - l'Europe, l'Amérique et l'Afrique - souligne l'importance du discours idéologique racistes et ses sources anthropologiques et religieuses, établit la dialectique existentielle sur laquelle est fondée la réponse haitienne au fait colonial et finalement fait état de ses répercussions à travers l'Histoire.

La participation africaine à l'édification de l'Amérique de Gérard Alphonse Ferrère met dans une perspective historique et même conjoncturelle l'immigration et les travaux forçés des Africains sur le nouveau continent et surtout leur lumineuse contribution à l'édification de la société américaine. Malgré les obstacles dressés par une société et un système racistes, les Noirs américains, comme le démontre Ferrère, arrivèrent à imprimer leurs marques indélébiles de leurs contributions au progrès au développement de ce continent en particulier et du monde en général.

La sauvagerie de la civilisation de Frantz Antoine Lecomte qui clôt cette série d'essais examine scrupuleusement de nombreuses considérations établies comme théories causales historiques de la colonisation de l'Amérique, sanctionne l'horrible processus de l'asservissement et les conditions hallucinantes dans lesquelles ont péri plus de 75 millions d'Amérindiens et 12 millions d'Africains.

Les auteurs de 1492: le viol du Nouveau Monde ont tenté, dans un effort de démystification, de présenter dans un cadre historique et une toile de fond plus juste les dynamiques qui ont construit le nouvel ordre mondial de 1492. Ce coup d'essai est un coup de maitre, la tentative est une réussite. C'est un livre à se procurer, et, comme ils le disent eux-mêmes, "essentiellement écrit en l'honneur des déshérités d'aujourd'hui, des oubliés de l'Histoire et des victimes de la modernité depuis 1492".


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**Newsletter**

All materials to be published in this newsletter may be sent to:

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Jephté Guillaume’s “Voyage of Dreams” Double CD, debut album Chrysalis (Style) label Distributed by Spiritual Life Music in US and Avex in Japan

Produced by Jephté Guillaume for Tet Kale Productions, Inc. and distributed by the legendary DJ and house producers Joe Clauseell and Stefan Prescott through their label Spiritual Life Music, Voyage of Dreams provides a delicate balance between modern rhythms and expressions with the traditional ancestral elements of Jephté’s Afro-Haitian-Latin heritage.

A musical ambassador for the spiritual messages of both the Haitian revolution/reconstruction and the New York diaspora of today, Jephté Guillaume embodies in his music the body and soul of Haiti. His songs, all sung in Kreyol, often take the form of incantations to a superior being (THE PRAYER) and renew the ancient (and current) beliefs of Vodou. For example, LAKOU-A (which can be defined as a neighborhood or courtyard, and also a spiritual location or temple) on Voyage of Dreams refers to the entire country of Haiti, which is in desperate spiritual as well as material need (Where are the elders, fathers, mothers, children in Haiti? I’m searching for them...who is protecting the spiritual base of my country? No one...) and is consequently being invaded by malevolent spirits: mercenaries, thieves, murderers, imperialists, and worse.

According to ethnomusicologist Dr. Gage Averill, “Jephté’s Haitian heritage gives him an intimate window into the history of Africans, displaced by the slave trade, who...kept alive the links to the ancestors and to the gods through the religion known as Vodou...This album (Voyage of Dreams), almost a concept album in its theme and structure, is awash in images of displacement, travel, and the search for unity and spiritual fulfillment.

Jephté’s songs offer prayers, ask for spiritual guidance from the elders, challenge the madness of oppression and misery, and offer the hope embodied in images of home, family, country and liberation. But anchoring almost all of this is the persistent beat - the groove - to inspire dance. Perhaps the most powerful influence of Vodou on Jephté’s music is the realization that the most profound questions and the most soul-wrenching quests need not be divorced from the joy of dancing. This is most palpable in RARA SHOUTS OUTS in which the beat of rara, a spring processional closely intertwined with Vodou, is the ground on which Jephté calls out to “Let me enter,” a cry often directed to the Iwa Legba (guardian of the crossroads between the two worlds) at the start of ceremonies.

In a world where almost everyone seems to be in motion, where everyone seems to be a migrant or a traveler, and where families are separated by oceans, Jephté’s quest may just well be our own.

by Kathleen Burke

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Journal of Haitian Studies

*Journal of Haitian Studies* is an interdisciplinary scholarly journal founded by the Haitian Studies Association (Asosayson Etid Ayisyen/Association des Etudes Haïtiennes) in 1994. The aim of the *Journal* is to solicit and publish articles of high quality in various disciplines or linkages of disciplines that focus on virtually any area of Haitian culture, history or development. The orientation of principle is that the *Journal* publishes studies of scholarly, theoretical or critical nature and avoids any discourse that would tend to make of it a forum for political debate.

Submissions should be mailed to Dr. Claudine Michel, Center for Black Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara CA 93117 (email:michel@omni.ucsb.edu).
"Just What the Doctors Ordered": HSA's Controversial Panel on Medical Anthropology at the AMHE Convention

by Karen Richman, Ph.D.
University of Notre Dame

The first organized collaboration between the Haitian Studies Association and the Association of Haitian Physicians Abroad (AMHE) took place last summer. The Haitian Studies Association sponsored a panel on medical anthropology entitled Culture, Beliefs, Religion, and Health at the 25th Annual Convention of the Association of Haitian Physicians Abroad. The presenters were Dr. Paul Brodwin, Dr. Rose-Marie Chierici, Dr. Paul Farmer and myself. Alix Cantave and I organized the panel.

The conference was hosted by the Chicago chapter of the AMHE, especially by Dr. Mildred Olivier (conference chair), Ms. Monique Germain (vice chair), and Dr. Serge Pierre-Louis (scientific panels chair). The week-long conference attracted hundreds of Haitian medical professionals from Haiti and the diaspora. A group of attorneys simultaneously convened the first national meeting of Haitian lawyers abroad. In honor of the special anniversary, there were a dazzling variety of special events including several keynote speakers, tours, art and book exhibits, recreational activities and workshops, the outdoor public festival, Taste of Chicago, and a final gala dinner with an awards presentation and dance to the live sounds of Hi-Tech Band.

To start the session, I provided an overview of anthropological perspectives on disease, misfortune and affliction. As anthropologists studying healing and health, we have two broad objectives. First we aim to illuminate interrelationships between illness and healing/medical systems and specific social, cultural, religious, political and economic relations. Second, we endeavor to apply that understanding in concrete, meaningful ways.

Our work begins with such key questions as "How do societies understand the causes of disease, misfortune and affliction? How do they act upon our conceptions of health and of therapy? How do they explain the failures and successes of therapy?" All religions or cultures apply a rigorous logic to their quest to understand misfortune, indeed they are obsessively logical but the premises on which they base their logics are highly variable and make sense and reinforce other institutions, structures, and beliefs in their society. As anthropologists, we differ with biomedical doctors by accepting that no only physiological processes, but also social, religious, economic and political relations can be such premises. Indeed to deny these premises is scientifically and morally untenable, since the various Haitian communities we work with, as both researchers and activists, insist that their misfortune and the failure of biomedical therapy cannot be accounted for by physiological premises alone.

Serious engagement with ordinary Haitians' beliefs and practices can immediately dispel several myths. First, they apply a rigorous logic to etiology and therapy. This logic is not hostile to bio medicine, but rather embraces it. Their explanations of disease typically correlate with an MD's. Thus they agree on HOW someone got sick. But bio medicine does not go far enough because it cannot consistently answer WHY that person became ill. Coincidence is often not a valid explanation. They must know why; not knowing is intolerable; it means that we cannot understand our world and act effectively on it. Why was it so-an-so and not so-and-so? Or, why was it one group and not another? In the case of an accident, what caused the person to be in that particular place at the precise moment of the calamity? Their understanding of causation covers the how AND the why.

The presentations by Paul Farmer and Rose-Marie Chierici focused on the causal relationship of poverty to illness and disease. Through their work, we heard the voices of people from two distinct rural Haitian communities (Plateau Central and Borgne) reveal how the structuring of poverty itself is perceived as the main cause of their affliction and the main impediment to successful medical therapy. Next, Paul Brodwin presented some of his new research on the emergent (and yet little understood) Haitian diaspora community of Guadeloupe. His paper explored how Guadeloupians' negative images of Haitian healers and their actual practices of healing intersect with the formation of identity. I addressed linkages between religion, ritual and affliction, which owes much to Paul Brodwin's earlier research.

Our panel provoked a sudden and very spirited response! Reactions among our audience ranged from angry and defensive, to enthusiastically supportive, to outrage at those who criticized us. Several individuals wanted to learn more about the Haitian Studies Association (They were later sent information about our association). Discussions between members of the panel and audience continued long after the session ended. Our panel quickly earned the reputation as the most controversial group of the week-long conference. Apparently controversy was "just what the (medical) doctor ordered," that doctor being Serge Pierre-Louis, the scientific chair of the conference.

While he may have anticipated the vigorous reaction of his peers, which he had the pleasure of moderating, we on the panel were caught by surprise. Their emotional response certainly underscored the importance of our anthropological work. It is significant that not one of the comments addressed to us directly engaged the material we presented. What, then, were they reacting to? What "buttons" did we press? We panelists talked afterwards and we identified (at least) three.

One, the persistence of alternative logics to the bio medical one, which grant authority to social, religious, economic and political causes.
I endeavored to show how these logics complemented, rather than contradicted biomedical premises. I focused on the beliefs and practices of a group who are Catholic and who serve their inherited spirits, or lwa. (Since religious affiliation and practice are extremely diverse in Haiti, rendering generalizations about "Haitian religion" is highly dubious. Many are Protestant, more are Catholic, and many, but by no means all Catholics, also serve their inherited spirits, or lwa.)

The Leogane-based community I studied distinguish between illnesses caused by biological agents and those with a social etiology. The first is deemed "simple," because it is not motivated by complex interpersonal motivations, and can be treated by an M.D. or other healer. The other category is a social illness, an inevitable result of being in society, that is to say, human. Human beings exist in a web of social relationships with spirits (lwa), who are inherited through the family, ancestors (mo), and people (moun). The spirits cause or "send" one type of affliction (maladi lwa). Ill-meaning persons use sorcery to send the other type (maladi moun). (Ancestors do not tend to afflict their descendants.) A systematic logic distinguishes within and between categories of maladi lwa and maladi moun. This schema corresponds to a humorous model. Pantheons of "cool" lwa send chronic, not-acute symptoms; "hot" lwa send acute illnesses.

Given their unswerving respect for bio medicine, most persons seek biomedical treatment when they are sick. Only when they have experienced repeated disappointment with biomedical diagnosis and treatment might they suspect that the illness has a different etiology. Correct diagnosis of the etiology is crucial. If the etiology is of the "sent" type, the only cure is through ritual, to effect a magical change in the untoward social relations that "sent" the affliction. Through ritual action, people can intervene in an empowering way, acting upon causes they can control. These forces are moral, religious and above all social, reinforcing their core premise that human beings are not independent agents but rather social persons who only exist in social relations.

Thus rather than being hostile to bio medicine, this eminently humane logic encompasses bio medicine in a wider theory of causation. Yet to some, their approach signifies backwardness, superstition and ignorance which frustrate development and modernization. They are the chief reason for Haitians' chronic immiseration.

Two, the eloquent critiques of ordinary and very poor people in Kanj (Canes in Plateau Central and Boy (Borgne in the North).

Paul Farmer and Rose-Marie Chierici conveyed their pointed words in their presentations. They perceive a causal relationship between the social, political and economic structuring of their poverty, their afflictions, and the failure of biomedical therapies. Theirs is a critique that cannot be ignored, that demands confrontation. At the same time it might provoke a sense of guilt among those of us who because we were born into more fortunate circumstances can afford to be ignorant of this causality. The connection between privilege and izations of misery was made very clear in Rose-Marie’s talk. We heard how some poor residents of Borgne understand their affliction; then we listened to the seemingly genteel, but disturbingly patronizing, rhetoric of a privileged person from the same locality.

Three, the virulent, racialized prejudice toward Haitian migrant workers in Guadeloupe—a fellow Francophone, Creole speaking, Caribbean society.

Paul Brodwin’s discussion demonstrated that Frantz Fanon’s analysis of the French, “white” imagination of Caribbean “blacks” equally applies to how Guadeloupians imagine Haitian migrants living among them. They are the Other. Haitians remind certain Guadeloupians of what they try to repress in themselves, and that makes them ambivalent. They are feared but simultaneously desired because of their perceived “savage” magical and healing powers. Guadeloupian professionals’ secretly patronize the very Haitian healers they publicly condemn. Haitians manipulate this perception to bolster their identity in the face of prejudice and discrimination.

Listening to Haitians’ experience in Guadeloupe was upsetting on several levels. Given the social, cultural, political, racial, and historical links between the French department and Haiti, the description of Guadeloupian’s perception of Haitians as racialized savages was shocking and hurtful. At the same time, it evoked parallels to the ambivalent practices of other national elites toward their poor, including Haiti’s. Did their images of Haitian migrants bring up the class and cultural prejudices dividing Haitians from one another?

These three issues compel us to confront vast differences of power, wealth, outlook, and identity. The goal of anthropology is to enlarge our understanding of others and ourselves. The journey can be uncomfortable, because it means turning the critical lens on ourselves. But if ventured, the personal and social rewards can be great. The challenge posed by our panel is to confront differences of class and culture within our society. Then perhaps we can transcend these differences and together begin seriously to remedy misfortune, affliction and disease. The result can only be empowering for all us.

Serenity by Essud Fungcap. The artist paints to excite, to calm, to stir emotion. He acknowledges the contribution that a bicultural upbringing, a Chinese father and a Haitian mother have made to his sense of wonder of the world around him. His works are in public and private collections throughout the U.S., Haiti, Canada and Europe.
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Please make your annual dues cheque payable to: The Haitian Studies Association and send it to the following address:

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