Celebrating Our 20th Anniversary in Haiti: A Conference Review

On November 6-8, 2008, the Haitian Studies Association (HSA) held its 20th Annual Conference, “Re: Union: Manifesting the Collective Power of Haitian Ingenuity” at Club Indigo in Montrouis, Haiti. For two days, several scholars, artists, students, and other professionals came together to share ideas and discuss issues Haiti has faced; past, present, and future. With the HSA marking its 20th anniversary, it seems only fitting that this was the largest conference HSA has held since its inception. With an attendance of more than 200 participants from Haiti and abroad, 28 panels and round-tables, one conference participant stated, “My last conference attended was in 1998...I am impressed with the higher level of topics, participants and organization this year.”

Dr. Mirlande Manigat, from the Université Quisqueya in Port-au-Prince was the Keynote Speaker. As an educator and a political scientist in Haiti, Dr. Mirlande Manigat asked, “What is ingenuity without proper quality education?” She stressed the importance of education and the need for Haiti to strengthen its educational system in order to further enhance Haitian ingenuity.

In response to the series of four hurricanes that devastated Haiti in August and September of 2008, HSA asked several leading scholars on the environment to address the issue of Environmental Sustainability...
President’s Letter

I am thrilled to serve the association in this capacity and looking forward to following in the foundation created by our founders and previous presidents.

One of my main initiatives as president of the association is membership. By membership, I mean increasing our engagement with our members beyond the annual conference, increasing our visibility as an association to the general public, and finding ways to enhance the significant contributions of this association. As such, I have sought to revitalize some committees by bringing on new members to actively serve on them as well as create some new initiatives as ways to engage our members while adding value to the membership of everyone of the association.

Below is a description of the 2009 committee assignments for the association as well as a description of the new initiatives. You will notice that the majority of the committees consist of not only board members but members of the association. I want to thank all of our new and existing members of these committees who agreed to provide their service to the association. The association needs your expertise, talent, and service.

Conference Planning - Charlene Desir and Tatiana Wah (Co-Chairs), Barbara Nesin, Carolle Charles, Daphne Bruno, Shauna Murray, Marc Prou, Guerda Nicolas

Nomination - Guitel Nicoleau (Chair), Florence Bellande-Robertson

Publication - Legrace Benson and Claudine Michel (Co-Chairs)

Website - Adam John (Chair), Francois Pierre-Louis, Brian Avrill, and Claire-Helene Heese-Boutin

Membership - Barbara Nesin (Chair), Legrace Benson, Matthew Smith, Stanley Jean, Shauna Murray

Award - Guerda Nicolas and Guitel Nicoleau

Emerging Scholars - Nadege Clitandre, Charlene Desir (Co-Chairs) and several of other members of the association

New Committee/Task Force
Newsletter Editors -
James Asukile Allrich-Design Editor,
Vladimir Kwao Magloire-Technical Editor,
Yveline Alexis-History Column Editor;
Manoucheka Celeste-Content Editor

Guerda Nicolas
The Student and Emerging Scholars group is a recent standing committee of the organization. The Committee seeks to increase and encourage the participation of students (both undergraduates and graduate) and post doctoral scholars in H.S.A. and facilitate networks and mentorship opportunities. The Committee is also committed to become a resource for all students in Haiti and outside that are interested in Haitian Studies. Presently, the Co-Chairs for the Committee are Charlene Desir and Nadege Clitandre.

In 2006, H.S.A established the Student and Emerging Scholars Fund, a commitment that continues today. For 2009, H.S.A will earmark $1000 for a scholarship ($500 for an undergraduate and $500 for a graduate student). These funds can be used for travel expenses towards attending the conference and/or a specific research project on Haiti. The following are the eligibility requirements:

All full-time students (minimum of 7 credits in each of 2 consecutive academic terms). Undergraduate students: Minimum 3.0 GPA, demonstrated involvement in the Haitian community (could include school activities, volunteer activities with Haitian orgs or those with large Haitian populations), an essay describing the applicant’s commitment to pursue Haitian Studies, and 2 reference letters, 1 of whom is a scholar willing to serve as a mentor for the student. It could encourage undergrads to attend their first HSA conference, without requiring that they present at their first experience at HSA.

Graduate students: Minimum 3.5 GPA, demonstrated involvement with research on Haiti and/or the Haitian community; an abstract proposal for an upcoming HSA conference; an essay describing the applicant’s commitment to pursue Haitian Studies, and 2 reference letters, 1 of whom is a scholar willing to serve as a mentor for the student. (The application instructions could offer students who do not have a Haitian Studies mentor to ask for HSA’s recommendations of names for them to talk to.)

The applications are due postmarked by Dec. 31 each year, with decisions to be reviewed by the Student and Emerging Scholar Committee and presented to the Board for its approval at its Spring Board meeting. Applicants could be notified by April 30, to give them time to submit abstract proposals in time for the June deadline for the conference for the following Fall.

For your information:

Professor Carrol Coates (SUNY Binghamton) reports that the English translation of Marie Chauvet’s Amour Colère et Folie will appear in August, 2009 as Love, Anger, and Madness, translated by Professor Rose Myriam Réjouis (New School). In collaboration with Val Vinokur, Professor Réjouis also translated Patrick Chamoiseau’s Texaco several years ago and won the annual prize for the best literary translation from the American Translators Association.
Sud-est (CROSS) was invited to be one of our key panelists. Mr. Mathurin along with several of his colleagues arrived in Montrouis from Jacmel with a large diagram of the ecology of Southern Haiti. This was indeed a very impressive structure build with papier maché by individuals in the southeastern region.

The Haitian Studies Association was also pleased to award numerous scholarships to Haitian professionals and students in Haiti and from abroad. Due to kind donations from various universities and individual donors, we were able to sponsor 30 students from the State University of Haiti as well as approximately 25 academics, professionals and artists who reside in Haiti.

Special thanks also go to FOKAL for sponsoring this year’s cultural event, which featured a special performance by Jean-Guy Saintus and the dance troupe Artcho. Additional thanks to the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of the Diaspora for their logistical support.
It was a busy fall and winter at the Center for Black Studies Research at the University of California, Santa Barbara. The Center’s Haiti-related initiatives include publishing the Journal of Haitian Studies (JOHS), promoting visual media on Haiti, and increasing awareness in the U.S. of the challenges facing Haiti. We are delighted to report significant achievements on all three fronts in just the last few months.

**JOHS:** Journal of Haitian Studies editor, Claudine Michel, and associate editor, LeGrace Benson, both received service awards at the HSA conference in November. Chryss Yost, managing editor of the Journal, represented the Center and accepted Dr. Michel’s award on her behalf.

The forthcoming issue of the Journal, Volume 15 Number 1, will be a collection of the papers presented at the 20th anniversary conference. We are currently welcoming submissions for issue 15.2. For submission guidelines for the Journal of Haitian Studies, please visit our Web site at [http://journalofhaitianstudies.org](http://journalofhaitianstudies.org).

The most recent issue of the Journal includes an index of all articles that have appeared in JOHS since Volume 1. “We’ve been wanting to publish an index volume for a while,” said Chryss, “to make the scholarship more readily accessible.” Look for the index in issue 14.2.

The 20th anniversary conference was managing editor Chryss Yost’s first visit to Haiti as well as her first opportunity to meet many JOHS contributors and HSA board members face-to-face. “After so many years of communicating with people long distance, it was wonderful to meet them in person,” said Chryss upon her return. “Arriving in Haiti just days after Obama’s election was thrilling. It was a celebration that started at the airport and continued through the conference.” Chryss expressed gratitude to HSA board member Nadège Clitandre. “The resort in Montrouis was beautiful,” said Chryss. “After the conference, Nadège and her friend drove me all over Port au Prince. I especially appreciated being able to see Bibliotèque du Soleil, the library Nadège has created with her father.” The Bibliotèque, one of the Center’s sponsored projects, was a sanctuary in the bustling city. “The tranquility and order of the library, compared to the rush outside the gate, was something that photos just can’t capture.

**Poto Mitan:** We are thrilled to announce that our documentary film project, *Poto Mitan: Haitian Women, Pillars of the Global Economy*, had its world premiere in January 2009 at the Santa Barbara International Film Festival (SBIFT). Co-directed and co-produced by anthropologist Mark Schuller, who studies Haiti, and Renée Bergan, an award-winning filmmaker, the project was launched in Santa Barbara (both Mark and Renée are now New York-based) and has received administrative and financial support from the Center. The film examines the lives of five Haitian women and offers an insider’s perspective on globalization, the political and economic crisis in Haiti, and the resilient women who are challenging the system. *Poto Mitan* was nominated for SBIFT’s Social Justice Award, bestowed annually on a documentary film. The film was very well received, with sizable audiences in attendance and viewers staying afterwards to ask the filmmakers about their methodology, their creative process, and their experiences in Haiti.

The U.S. community of Haiti scholars was instrumental in the making of *Poto Mitan*. Center Director Claudine Michel, associate producer, was a consultant on all aspects of the film from the conception of the project. Wesleyan University professor and spoken-word artist Gina Athena Ulysse served as an associate producer. “Gina contributed timely advice, thoughtful critique, an artistic eye, and solid scholarship” to the project, said Mark. Added Renée, “She also lent critical fundraising support and connected us with Haitian music producer Chico Boyer.”

HSA editorial board member Edwidge Danticat contributed narration to the film, telling a krik krak story that lends structure to the narrative and places the struggles of the women depicted in the film in a historical and cultural context. “Edwidge’s narration adds a whole new level to the film,” remarked Claudine. “We are very grateful for her participation.”

For information about upcoming screenings of *Poto Mitan*, please visit the film’s Web site, [http://potomitan.net](http://potomitan.net)
This summer the Africana Studies Department at the University of Massachusetts Boston offers a unique academic program on location in Haiti. This program explores the history, politics, culture, and the economic and social developments taking place in Haiti, from both external and internal perspectives. It will facilitate students’ understanding of Haiti through total immersion into culture, environment, language, and the country’s economic, political and social realities. Students will visit significant historical, cultural, and ecological sites in various towns including day trips to St. Marc, Gonavies and Kenscoff. Other planned field trips include a two-day excursion to the beautiful artistic town of Jacmel in the southeast part of Haiti, and a special two-day historic and cultural field trip to Cap Haitien to visit the citadel and King Henri Christophe’s Sans-Souci palace ruins in the town of Milot.

Additional activities will include presentations by local experts, participation in local cultural events, and meetings with civic and political leaders. Students are expected to attend two preparatory sessions at UMass Boston, read the assigned materials, and be prepared to participate in class discussions.

The fee for the program with 3 credits is $2450. Students have the option of earning 3 additional credits for an added fee of $450. The fee covers all instruction, field trips, housing, and all local transportation in Haiti. The fee does not include books, insurance, meals during weekend excursions or transportation between the US and Haiti. Undergraduate, Graduate and Continuing Education Professionals are encouraged to apply. For more information please feel free to contact Dr. Marc Prou at Marc.Prou@umb.edu or Susan Griffin at Susan.Griffin@umb.edu. Please also visit the UMass Boston website for more information: http://ccde.umb.edu/international/haiti/summer/

ANNOUNCEMENTS & CALL for PAPER PROPOSALS

21ST ANNUAL CONFERENCE

New Ecologies: Actualizing Global Contributions and Development in Haiti.

November 12-14th, 2009
Indiana University,
Bloomington Indiana

Haitian Studies Association 2009 Call for Papers Proposal
for more information visit http://www.haitianstudies.umb.edu/conference.html
The Haitian Creole Language and Culture Summer Institute have been offered in Massachusetts for more than two decades. Since the summer of 1995, the Institute has been conducted at the Harbor Campus of UMass Boston in joint collaboration with the Africana Studies Department, the Haitian Studies Program, and the Division of Corporate, Continuing, and Distance Education.

This year the Institute will have two components. There will be a three-week intensive program in different levels, geared toward the acquisition and practice of Haitian Creole. Also offered is a course in techniques of translation for advanced students.

In addition to class work, all courses make use of cultural activities to enhance the study of the language. Evaluation of student achievement and proficiency for placement and progress will be conducted both informally and formally during and at the conclusion of the course.

To give participants an additional immersion in the Haitian-speaking environment they will have an opportunity to participate, on a voluntary basis, in field work activities in different Haitian community-based organizations and agencies outside the classroom time.

Participants for the Institute come from a variety of settings across the United States looking to develop or improve their language skills. The program is designed to meet the needs of those who plan to conduct research in Haiti or in the Haitian Diaspora, or who work in a volunteer or professional capacity either in Haiti or with Haitians abroad.

Although many Institute participants come from the Boston area, the Institute staff will assist out-of-town participants to find accommodations with Haitian families, where participants are immersed in a language and culture-oriented environment.

For more information please contact Dr. Marc Prou at Marc.Prou@umb.edu or visit the UMass Boston website: http://ccde.umb.edu/summerinstitute/haitiancreole/

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**CARIBBEAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

Kingston, Jamaica • June 1-5, 2009

Are you going to the Caribbean Studies Association Conference this June? If so, we would like to meet you.

Please check the Haitian Studies website (http://www.haitianstudies.umb.edu) for more information regarding the Haitian Studies Association’s Meet and Greet at CSA in June.

For more information please contact HSA at HSA@umb.edu.
Haitian American Society Volunteer Spring Break to Help Haiti’s Environment Needs your support

In the aftermath of the ecological disaster caused by the four successive devastating hurricanes Faye, Hanna, Gustave, and Ike of the summer of 2008, Haiti is left devastated. The death toll was estimated to be more than 4,000 and counting. Tens of thousands have been displaced and relocated. Plateau Central is one of the many devastated areas; an arid area which occasionally suffers from severe drought and famine. Last summer’s hurricane season was when Plateau Central saw its most grave damages. The ecological and social problems of the Republic of Haiti are directly related to its present economic situation and structure. This pushed those of the lower classes to make rationally bad decisions with such grave consequences, basically, involving them in cutting down trees to make charcoal to assure their livelihoods.

The situation can be reversed, if we start now, by engaging in a long-term program of reforestation by planting trees to protect and regenerate the environment. We must also create awareness in local communities of the necessity to care for and maintain the environment. Members of the Haitian American Society (HAS) are engaged in a collaborative effort to do just that.

A group of students – most of them of Haitian descent – from Haitian American Society (HAS) at the University of Massachusetts Boston are planning to travel to Hinche, Plateau Central, Haiti on March 14-22, 2009. The trip is an ecological mission that will: (1) contribute to solving the environmental problem, and (2) empower local populations to build their economic capacity by planting trees that produce fruits that are exportable. This project is long-term where members will continue the work by putting in place mechanisms for long-term planning and evaluation of work previously done. We will enlarge the project by including other students and groups in the Haitian community with similar programs and commitments. This is in conjunction with Organization of Support to the Development of the Plateau Central, a transnational NGO based in the Greater Boston area with its branch in Hinche, Plateau Central.

In order for such work to be done, we need financial contributions from YOU in addition to the UMASS and nearby Haitian communities. For further inquiry or to make contributions, please feel free to contact James D Eliscar at james.eliscar001@umb.edu or Lunecee Eligene at Lunecee.eligene001@umb.edu, umb_has1@yahoo.com.

From: LeGrace Benson, Associate Editor, Journal of Haitian Studies

RE: Twentieth Anniversary Conference Archives of presentations

More than two dozen of the panelists at the 20th Annual Conference have sent their papers to be archived at Haitian Studies Association and nearly all also submitted their paper to the Journal of Haitian Studies for possible publication. The papers cover a wide range of topics and the research and field study behind them all are noteworthy. Haitian scholarship is both more far reaching and deeper as we move into our third decade. As pro tem archivist and Associate Editor of the Journal, I applaud the quality of the papers received and thank each of you. For those who may not have sent your papers, I invite you to consider doing so now to legrace.benson@gmail.com.
POTO MITAN: HAITIAN WOMEN, PILLARS OF THE GLOBAL ECONOMY begun at the behest of working-class women in Haiti, the documentary Poto Mitan: Haitian Women, Pillars of the Global Economy premiered at the Santa Barbara International Film Festival in January. We have also been accepted to the Boston International Film Festival in April!!

Told through compelling lives of five courageous Haitian women workers, Poto Mitan gives the global economy a human face. Each woman’s personal story explains neoliberal globalization, how it is gendered, and how it impacts Haiti: inhumane working/living conditions, violence, poverty, lack of education, and poor health care. While Poto Mitan offers in-depth understanding of Haiti, its focus on women’s subjugation, worker exploitation, poverty, and resistance, which demonstrate that these are global struggles. Finally, through their collective activism, these women demonstrate that despite monumental obstacles in a poor country like Haiti, collective action makes change possible.

Marie-Jeanne details dual struggles as a woman and worker: she toils under miserable conditions to give her children the education she was denied because of gender discrimination and the high cost of school. Living and braving death in Cité Soleil, Solange details how Haiti’s current violence stems from a long-brewing economic crisis and how the global apparel industry’s inherent instability affects Haiti. Frustrated with male-dominated unions, Frisline offers a Marxist-feminist analysis of Haiti’s contemporary situation, including Haiti’s 2008 food crisis. Working for thirty years, Thérèse brings wisdom, a historical perspective, and a comparative analysis. Pushed off her land by foreign agricultural policies, activist Hélène leads a new grassroots campaign against violence, encouraging women to defend themselves. These five brave women demonstrate that despite monumental obstacles in a poor country like Haiti, collective action makes change possible.

The women’s own astute analyses are supported by interviews with Haitian NGO activists, government ministers, and scholars providing global, economic, and political context. The women’s struggles to unionize and images of their deplorable working conditions (captured by spy cameras) are juxtaposed with contradictory interviews of factory owners. Ultimately, these resilient women’s hardships are offset with positive images of them organizing and uniting their communities.

Throughout the film, the women’s stories are woven together by close-up shots of a mother’s hands braiding her daughter’s hair, while acclaimed novelist Edwidge Danticat narrates a “krik krak,” traditional folklore. This poetic story demonstrates Haitian women’s historical depth of struggle and resistance, while paying homage to Haiti’s oral storytelling culture. The krik-krak grows and weaves with the film, until finally the two resolve together, with hope and resilience. It also showcases a range of contemporary Haitian music in addition to women’s empowerment songs by the women themselves.

Poto Mitan’s unique quality rests upon the women’s acute understanding of the power of film. Citing the Haitian proverb, “hearing and seeing are two different things,” the women implored Dr. Schuller to share their stories with people in the U.S., people who have the power to make change.

Poto Mitan will be a tool for education and empowerment; to inspire people to think critically, look behind the label, and get involved. We are connected: U.S. consumers buy the fruits of their labor; our government shapes Haiti through development/foreign policy. Our struggles have a common thread. By fighting for justice for women, workers, or Haiti, cannot help but bring about our own liberation.

To obtain a copy, arrange a screening on campus or in your community, or for information related to the film’s themes or how to get involved, visit the website: http://www.potomitan.net
1957 marked the beginning of the Duvalier regime in Haiti. Beginning with François “Papa Doc” Duvalier (1957-71) and continuing with his son, Jean-Claude “Baby Doc” Duvalier (1971-1986), the duo established a dictatorship on the island that wrecked havoc on Haiti’s political, economic, and social development. In their 29 years of rule, the Duvaliers: 1) curbed Haitians constitutional rights, 2) formed a brutal militia group, the ton ton macoutes that terrorized opponents to their regime and innocent civilians, 3) prompted a heavy migration of Haitians away from the island, and 4) grossly mismanaged the country’s economic resources. While in office, “Papa Doc” survived numerous invasion and coup attempts. Before dying in 1971, he extended his rule to his then nineteen year old son who was deposed of in 1986 amidst popular protest.

For further reading on this important and complex period in Haiti’s history, consider Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s Haiti, State Against Nation: The Origins and Legacy of Duvalierism and David Nicholls, From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour, and National Independence in Haiti. Our very own H.S.A. member, Dieulermesson Petit-Frere offered the following review of Marie Vieux’s work, Les Rapaces that touches on this period as well.


A en croire certains, ce roman, aussi réaliste qu’il soit, n’est pas la seule sinon la première œuvre à avoir dénoncer la dictature duvaliériste. Il s’agit d’une autopisie –pour reprendre le mot du professeur Max Dominique- de la société haïtienne pendant plus d’une décennie. Mises à part certains faits réservés à ce qu’on appelle chez nous la petite histoire qui ne s’y trouvent pas, avec ces 120 pages, l’auteur a fait une radiographie complète de la société de l’époque. Le roman aurait pu être titré “Scènes de la vie haïtienne des années 70-80”.


En effet, il s’agit d’une société qui s’autodétruit. Une société qui produit ses propres monstres. Le roman nous met en présence d’une réalité qui existe dans toutes sociétés sous-développées : la lutte pour la survie. Les personnages vivent dans une sphère. Il y a un rapport constant entre eux. Et la faim sert de prétexte à toutes les actions qu’ils ont posées. Le chat a faim, il a mangé le rat. Les pauvres ont mangé le chat parce qu’ils avaient faim. Les miliciens ont tué les pauvres pour imposer leur autorité parce qu’ils avaient la faim du pouvoir. Il s’agit d’un enfermement total.

Les Rapaces peuvent être perçus comme une sorte de reconstitution du passé haïtien sous le monde narratif. Du point de vue de l’œuvre, les rapaces n’étaient autres que le gouvernement et ses sbires qui semaient le deuil et le terreur au sein de la population. Cette population livrée à elle-même et qui ne caressait –depuis 1806- que l’espoir d’un lendemain meilleur. Ce peuple replié sur lui-même parce que son rêve déchu.
Press Release

21st Annual Conference
Haitian Studies Association, Twenty-first Annual Conference

New Ecologies: Actualizing Global Contributions and Development in Haiti.

November 12-14th, 2009
Indiana University, Bloomington Indiana

As we look toward the future of Haiti and its Diaspora we must envision the possibility of a new era in the development of Haiti. Over the past twenty years, the Haitian Studies Association (HSA) has acknowledged the scholarship that has contributed to Haitian Studies in all disciplines stemming from the arts, education, literature, economics, health, political science, spirituality, etc. The theme of H.S.A’s 21st annual conference is New Ecologies: Actualizing Global Contributions and Development in Haiti. Ecology encompasses the relationship between organisms and their environments and, in this context, it highlights the interconnectedness between the various domains of Haitian studies. Thus, the theme of ‘New Ecologies’ is intended to encourage, promote, and support the revival of the arts and sciences community, emphasizing the viability of nature and human comfort, aesthetics, cultures and diversity of peoples – mutually enforcing relationships and processes. By focusing on “New Ecologies,” we will showcase not only historical and current programs that reflect this theme but also innovative ideas and methods for forging interdisciplinary relationships and programs to benefit Haiti. We invite papers that offer both an inspiring vision of Haiti and contribute to new possibilities, new ideas, and new developments as we position Haiti in the rapidly changing global environment.

We are particularly interested in panels and papers that examine and present a holistic understanding of Haiti and Haitian studies. In addition, we seek to highlight Haitian projects, and programs that have both local and global implications. Scholars, practitioners, and activists from all disciplines are encouraged to submit proposals. These disciplines include, but are not limited to: Urban Studies, Economic Development, Sustainable Development, Education, Community Development, Natural Sciences, Sociology, Environmental Studies, Psychology, Political Science, History, Immigration and Diaspora Studies, Religion, Literature, Music, Gender Studies, Anthropology, Film Studies, Performing Arts, Visual Arts, Text and Digital Imaging Arts, etc.

The program will consist of panels, roundtables, keynote presentations and poster sessions. Selected papers from the conference will appear in the Journal of Haitian Studies (JOHS), a refereed academic publication of the Haitian Studies Association, to be issued approximately one year following the conference. Guidelines for general participation in the conference and a proposal submission form are attached. The deadline for proposals is June 1, 2009.

Please visit our website http://www.haitianstudies.umb.edu for more information regarding the conference and membership to the organization. We look forward to hearing from you and seeing you in November at the conference. Please feel free to contact the Haitian Studies Association at hsa@umb.edu.