

Haitian American Community Agenda Conference 2020

Rapporteur's Summary Report

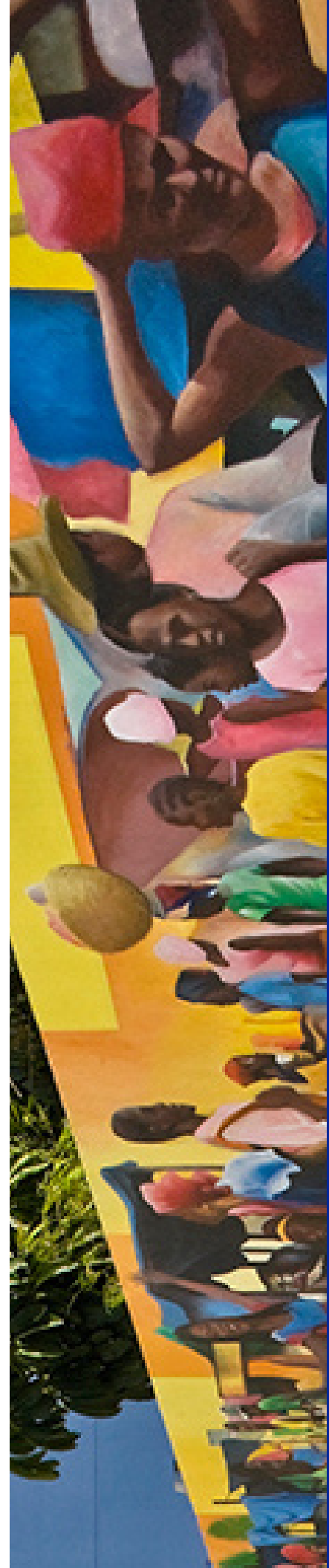
Setting priorities and strategies for the advancement of South Florida's Haitian American community.

FEBRUARY 15, 2020 | 8AM-6PM

LITTLE HAITI CULTURAL COMPLEX

212 NE 59TH TERRACE

MIAMI, FLORIDA 33137




Welcome

DISTINGUISHED PARTICIPANTS,

The Haitian American Community Agenda 2020 Planning Committee is pleased to welcome you to the 2020 South Florida Haitian American Community Agenda Conference. Nearly 20 years ago, over 100 engaged community stakeholders came together to cast an honest and deliberate look at our beloved community. Through a process of introspection and bold visioning, our trailblazers examined the issues and challenges we faced as a community. The robust agenda which emerged from this gathering put forth a set of achievable solutions which were undoubtedly reflected in our community's collective progress and accomplishments.

The strategies set forth 20 years ago have yielded powerful results. The examples of successful collective efforts abound, whether in the arena of community empowerment, immigration reform and political representation. Concerns expressed about the meager representation of Haitian Americans in governmental institutions, steered our resolve and today we have more than 30 elected officials in South Florida. Sant La, Haitian Neighborhood Center, as well as the Little Haiti Cultural Complex were conceived at the first Community Agenda Conference. Haitian Americans have achieved increased visibility, because we have channeled our voices to speak in unison.

While we celebrated our successes, the state of the community as documented through Census 2010 data, raised grave concerns. Thus, we organized our second Community Agenda Conference, convening pioneers and new participants, younger stakeholders, organizations in Dade, Broward and Palm Beach; all united in the vision of a strong and successful community.



The strategies set forth in 2014 have also yielded very impactful results. In 2015, Sant La launched the Sant La Fellows leadership development program; Avanse Ansanm emerged as the powerful voice of Haitian American Millennials; the Haitian American Professional Coalition strengthened its capacity to address the needs of its member organizations, representing lawyers, doctors, nurses, pharmacists and the business community. The Haitian American Faith Based Network emerged as an organization representing the powerful, yet silent faith network. And our communities in Broward and Palm Beach are making great strides increasing political representation and engagement.

As a community we recognize that in 2020 the rules of engagement have changed. Our needs and issues stubbornly persist as does our determination to address them. So much has changed. We communicate differently; whether its Facebook, Instagram or WhatsApp, we are all connected to powerful and at times disjointed communications networks. While we can enumerate many success stories, we know that there is more to be done. Our community is reeling from many local issues, including the cost of housing, gentrification, employment and immigration. Our complicated relationship with Haiti endures as we continue to define our role in shaping its destiny.

Twenty years later, our plate is still full! But we are up to the task! Our ranks have been reinforced by an army of young, multi-talented stakeholders. We are excited!

Thank you for joining us and let's get to work!

Program

8:00 AM

REGISTRATION & BREAKFAST

9:00 AM

WELCOME

Santra Denis, Avanse Ansamn

OPENING REFLECTIONS

Fayola Delica, Haitian American Professionals Coalition

ORDER OF THE DAY

Sandy Dorsainvil, Little Haiti Cultural Complex

9:15 AM

CONCURRENT SESSION I

NEW HAITIAN AMERICAN FAMILY

Roy Clement, Danna Demezier, Dr. Shirley Plantin
Mirva Cadet (Moderator)

CULTURAL PRESERVATION

Stephanie Chancy, Anna Etienne, Joann Millord, Marie Vickles
Sandy Dorsainvil (Moderator)

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Dr. Valencie Exceus, Mathew Jeanius, Josette Josue, Kenneth Victor
Marjorie Lozama (Moderator)

10:45 AM

CONCURRENT SESSION II

PARENT ENGAGEMENT & EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Dr. Andrée Bazile, Dr. Josée Gregoire, Patrick Lacouty
Dr. M. Rose Bléus (Moderator)

THE ECONOMY OF THE FUTURE

Rasha S. Cameau, Sheri Colas-Gervais, Beatrice Louissaint,
Djenane St. Fleur
Jeff Lozama (Moderator)

Program

THREATS & OPPORTUNITIES

Vanessa Joseph, Nancy Metayer, Katia Saint Fleur
Karen Andre, Esq. (Moderator)

FAITH BASED ENGAGEMENT

Dr. Celucien Joseph, Dr. Adenet Medacier
Dr. Marie Etienne (Moderator)

12:15 PM

LUNCH

1:30 PM

CRITICAL ISSUES SESSION

DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT & REIMAGINING HAITI

Alix Cantave, Johnny Celestin, Emmanuela Douyon, Michelle
Pierre-Louis
Santra Denis (Moderator)

CULTURE & IDENTITY

Rudy Jean-Bart, Dr. Charlene Desir, Gerard Metellus
Leonie Hermantin (Moderator)

ASSET BUILDING & PROTECTIONS

Vania Laguerre, JP Michel, Alix Alexis
Sabrina Solomon, Esq. (Moderator)

4:45 PM

WRAP UP SESSION

Workgroup Reports
Recommendations & Resolutions

5:30 PM

CLOSING REMARKS

Gepsie M. Metellus, Sant La

CLOSING RECEPTION

New Haitian American Family

The education of Haitian history is absent in the school system. We must create and implement acculturation and/or a diversion programs that will immerse our children in the learning of Haitian History. This will help to close the gap between parents and children, thus minimizing familial issues. Parents also need to understand the importance of social emotional learning. Similar programs exist, however they often lack funding and resources; and there is often a barrier to being able to share the existence of these programs to the community. We have an opportunity to lean on churches to communicate and teach the community. Also mental health counselors should increase home visitations to ensure access and comfort to for our Haitian families. We also need to encourage universities to produce more periodical cases studies/ reports on the Haitian community to help educate providers on the culture, remove stigmas and prepare them for the behaviors they will see in field.

Cultural Preservation



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Build an institution that can focus on culture. The Haitian Heritage Museum Leadership Center is interested in working in this area. This is a long-term initiative with ongoing education at cultural centers
- Increase support of "Spiritual Education" -- Voudou and Haitian traditions
- Leverage our collective cultural influence in the Miami art scene to increase support to already existing programs. Northeast 2nd Ave Partnership can lead this effort.
- Request that elected officials contribute more funds to cultural programming, immediately. Sant La and HAPAC can lead this effort.

OVERALL SUMMARY

Institutions must be built to ensure archives of games, music, proverbs, agriculture, crafts, etc. Spiritual part of Haitian culture must also be preserved. We must demystify Vodou with education. Haitian leaders need to understand cultural preservation and the arts; and how to leverage resources to contribute to the economic development of the community. Little Haiti could have become like New Orleans with Vodou culture. (The Vodou Holistic Center is closed.) Leedop Center in Miami – 1733 NE 162nd Street, Miami

The power to define has always escaped us, we have to define for ourself strategically engaging where pockets of Haitian in community exist, so we don't have the same people, i.e. college campus. We are losing the youth because of a lack of preservation. There is a "new wave of Haitian that exist." Youth are getting integrated into 'Black American Culture', and we are losing them. We must tap in, support & uplift them.

We need to elect Haitians like us; develop a philanthropic mind; create an institute (Social, arts, spiritual, etc.); and work collectively to build networks between existing culture institutions. We need to identify existing systems and best practices of preservation. Visual arts, scientific and cultural docs, preservations of culture through digitization. There are infrastructure problems in Caribbean, dloc wants to facilitate making information available to everyone.

Health & Wellness

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Advocate for better policies implemented; encourage the dicycle players; provide better; create a resource for people in the community, #1 educational forums. Community Leaders; elected officials; health providers focus group.
- (Social service challenges) Understanding the different levels of the systems (medical/health/social). Educating the community about the different levels of the system in the United States and abroad. Change behavior / Mind set Teen summits
- Impact of adults that have stress / dream deserved added form years a hard labor. Have to difficult conversations (it's a reality) before it becomes a crisis. Go to them and give them a reward for their participation

Parent Engagement & Educational Attainment

RECOMMENDATIONS

- We need to focus on building the capacity of organizations in Haiti. We can do this by partnering with organizations and looking for foundations to fund our projects. Several organizations can partner with an organization in Haiti. An example of foundation is 'Ayiti Community Trust'.
- We must not ignore what's happening in Haiti. We must talk about it and do something about it, like us in the diaspora and fitting engaged impact policy in Haiti.
- Create a lobbyist group(s) and people can fund them to lobby for us to influence policy in Haiti. Example: a group of \$40,000; People pledge \$10/month for 10 months, which gives us \$4,000,000.
- The diaspora must get together as groups and demand account ability from the Haitian Government for the funds taken for social media
- programs, etc.

OVERALL SUMMARY

The diaspora can make a bigger impact and needs to strategy to be more focused and for their funds to make a difference as now it doesn't have a seat at the table.

Emmanuela Dovyon suggested going away with the Ministry of Haitians, living abroad as they aren't effective, aren't doing much and it can be a director that is under the Ministry of foreign affairs.

The diaspora needs to care for itself first and must deal with the fragmentation in our community. We need conflict resolution as there are lots of conflicts.

Haiti needs to expand its production in items like cocoa, coffee, etc. in order to export. There's lots of potential there for economic growth and we need to invest in Foundations like 'Ayiti Community'.

The Economy of the Future

RECOMMENDATIONS

This session will examine the state of the Haitian American family in South Florida. Panelists will explore and assess the quality of resources available to families including children, teens, women and parents. Participants will be encouraged to identify strategies and programs that work and discuss assets or barriers. The objective of this session is to offer a vision of stable and thriving Haitian American families uplifted by culturally competent community strategies.

OVERALL SUMMARY

This session will address the conservation, promotion and evolution of artistic and cultural practices in South Florida. Panelists will offer an overview of the current landscape, business models, culinary assets and artistic expressions. Participants will contribute to the formulation of a blueprint for a more integrated and prosperous community.

Threats & Opportunities



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Census. We must organize in order for our community to be fully counted.
- Elections, Elected Officials, Institutions. We must get to know who our representatives are, know they work for us, create groups and visit their offices, walk the hallways.
- Climate Change. We must educate our community on what climate change is and explain how it has is and will continue to impact us.
- Immigration: We must create a campaign to round up all our family members and relatives who have been living here legally for many years and aren't U.S. citizens and get them to apply to become citizens.

OVERALL SUMMARY

Overall most of the discussions showed the need for education and collaboration. We are more powerful when we work in groups and we are powerful as they know Haitians vote but we're not using our power. We're not holding our elected officials accountable and we're working in silos. We need a Haitian American group that is known and the media knows who to go to when they need something like a response/thoughts around the Haitian diaspora and Haiti.

We must bridge the gap between the elders, generation x and, the millennials. Some say the elders aren't doing enough and are still waiting in line and the millennials are being told they move too fast and often don't consider the elders when making decisions.

Lack of good people running for office, people not doing the hard work to knock on doors, and they are not using social media to get the word out. Also it was mentioned that good people who run or have progressive ideas which will make a difference in the community aren't supported.

The issue of people having financial or other personal struggles was brought up as a reason people at times aren't engaging in social issues and other issues in the community. A recommendation that was brought up was the importance of filling out the census form because that's how we get resources and they would be allocated for things like therapy or other much needed resources.

Faith Based Engagement

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase engagement; spiritual leaders to be more involved in the community and outside their religion role.
- Must decolonize our mind and self-sustaining to help our community and our congregations – we can help ourselves.
- Engagement of Christian faith leaders and other religious sections to work Improving community programs.
- An interfaith organization to bring the various religious sections to come and work together to impact our society.

OVERALL SUMMARY

Religious education must be an integrated curriculum in our education system. Church provide school supplies, do membership programs, and teach reading literacy and language classes. We discussed the role of religious leaders to their congregations and the community at large.

We need to have a serious and intellectual conversation, especially between the Christian Faith and Vodouism, to work together for progress in our Haitian American community. This needs to be done with respect. We spoke about religious diversity in Haiti and in our diaspora. Religious freedom is important to be apart of our Haitian culture especially in this century. We elaborated on Vodou is a part of the Haitian culture and is a religion. We inherit our culture but choose our religion.

Diaspora Engagement & Reimagining Haiti

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Culture & Identity

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Townhall meetings to include community members and keep certain topics at the surface, homework given.
- Education and social media campaigns of our history, stories and trauma to begin story.
- Meeting the people where they are, having community surrogates, if parents cannot be present.
- Economic power and data to have power and buy-in.

OVERALL SUMMARY

Community Townhalls – with homework for community members. The need for programs to educate and help newcomers on adjusting to the culture shock. Negotiate difference of opinions & critical think and analysis. Encourage people to properly identify on The Census 2020 – affects, funding & improves our collectives' power.

We need to really think of the narrative and the stories we share – we shouldn't deny vodouism and the revolution, nor our indigenous power. Need for parent engagement, outside of basic human needs. Sticking together – geographically grants use power together. More events needed that bring out the entire family out. Economic power to merge the classes. Address religion – critical conversations. Document migration stories, why can't we have Christianity & Vodouism?

Negotiate power – Political and generational tie the Haitian community. Use religion as a healthy place for trauma. Improve our relationship and engagement with general Haitian population – be in churches. Social media campaign on history and knowledge of our own trauma. Get in spaces to have these critical conversations. We need community surrogates, if parents can't step in. Getting the data on us and many for power (Political, influence and decision making).

Asset Building & Protections

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Start program for kids - Start early – teach them and grow their knowledge about money and the importance of being consistent; being disciplined; impart on next generation
- Put Call to Action to the community on cooperative fund / Haitian Community Collective Fund (to fund major community needs, here and in Haiti)
- Start a cooperative to buy up strategic properties/corners of Little Haiti

OVERALL SUMMARY

Start small, get started with whatever amount you have (i.e. Brokerage firms, online firms). Pay yourself first (example 401K). Be consistent and discipline. Prepare for opportunity. Live below your means. Give back and think beyond yourself. Look at earning – are you earning enough versus the expenses that you have. Think investment not charity (community narrative).

Connect With Us:

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santla.org

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