



20  
23

# HAITIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY AGENDA CONFERENCE

LEVERAGING OUR POWER:  
50 YEARS FORWARD

SEPTEMBER 24, 2023

**FIU**

Kovens  
Conference Center

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

3000 NE 151st St,  
North Miami, FL 33181

# WELCOME

Dear Community Stakeholders,

Welcome to the 2023 edition of the South Florida Haitian American Community Agenda Conference. Sant La is proud to co-host this fourth conference in partnership with the Haitian American Foundation for Democracy (HAFFD). We are thrilled that you have joined us for a transformational experience and grateful to all who made this day possible: our sponsors, partners, planning teams and most especially our Sant La Fellows. Thank You!

The history of the South Florida Haitian American community was punctuated by the arrival of the first boat of refugees on December 12, 1972. 50 years later, our community boasts a vibrant cultural scene full of citizens, homeowners, entrepreneurs, elected officials, viable business corridors and community organizations.

Let us take a moment to recognize that as a community, we have made great strides since the first agenda-setting conference was held in 2000, and subsequently in 2014 and 2020. The good news is that many of the objectives set at these conferences have been met. For example, we advocated for the creation of a cultural center, a soccer field, community-sponsored scholarship programs for Haitian American students and programs to build our community's leadership bench. We've been able to increase our presence in state, county, and municipal governments and augment naturalizations—we have done this and so much more.

On this 50th anniversary, we are reminded that every policy victory we enjoy today is the result of collective efforts. These fights for our community were waged and won on the streets of Little Haiti and in local, state, and federal corridors of power. That is why we know we can make change when we come together, speak in unison and act collectively.

This 2023 conference, of which the theme is **Leveraging our Power: 50 Years Forward** is about accountability from all of us: business, faith, professional, community, youth, media and communications leaders... to achieve the highest bar: **Power!**



# WELCOME

The conference offers a platform to engage in pointed conversations about our socio-economic well-being. More importantly, this conference seeks to expand the pathways for concrete results in: intensified civic engagement and participation; expanding our political footprint; equitable access to resources to boost educational attainment; healthcare and well-being as a right; support for vulnerable youth, families, and elders; protections for hard-working women and men, essential to the health of our local and regional economy; closing the wealth gap; expanded financial investments in our neighborhoods and businesses; equitable participation in public sector contracting opportunities; immigration reform; and increased diaspora engagement in Haiti. These are only a few of the issues around which we must articulate achievable solutions and work toward their realization.

All of us, Haitians and Americans of Haitian descent of all political persuasions have a stake in the success of today's conference. We all share in the heavy lifting required to leverage our collective assets and strengthen our voices to build power in South Florida's Haitian American community. **Let's roll up our sleeves and get to work!**

With Warm Regards,

**GEPSIE M. METELLUS**

Executive Director, Sant La



# PROGRAM

## 8:00 AM

**REGISTRATION & NETWORKING BREAKFAST**

## 9:15 AM

**WELCOME REMARKS | GEPSIE M. METELLUS, E.D., SANT LA**

### **OPENING PLENARY SESSION**

#### **9:30 AM | WHO ARE WE?**

The demographic profile of the Haitian diaspora in South Florida |  
Dr. Maria Ilcheva, FIU Metropolitan Center (Presenter)

#### **10:00 AM | PORTRAYAL OF HAITIANS IN THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA**

Dr. Thomas Craemer (Presenter) | Carl Juste, Sevère Livincoeur, Carèl Pèdre,  
Merline Thermora (Panelists) | *Wilkin Brutus (Moderator)*

## 11:30 AM

### **CONCURRENT SESSIONS I**

#### **FRAGILE FOUNDATION: THE STATE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

University of Miami IDEAS Consortium (Presenters) | Dr. Marcheley Adam, Juliette  
Fabien, Dr. Josee Gregoire, Nadie Mondestin, Sabrina Tassy Lewis (Panelists) |  
*Leonie Hermantin (Moderator)*

#### **LEVEL UP: PATHWAYS FOR EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT**

Mirva Cadet, James Dominique, Dr. Gastride Harrigan, Marline Paris-Lawson,  
Jeanne Petit, Lesly Prudent (Panelists) | *Dr. Shirley Plantin (Moderator)*

#### **THE FUTURE IS TECHNOLOGY: ASSESSING OUR LOCAL TECH ECOSYSTEM**

Whitney Lubin, Getro Naissance, J.P. Vertil (Panelists) |  
*Doris Jean Pierre (Moderator)*

#### **FORGE FORWARD: LEVERAGING OUR MOMENTUM**

Matthew Anderson, Tamara Beliard Rodriguez, Sandy Dorsainvil,  
Pastor Jimmy Loiseau, Paul Namphy (Panelists) | *Santra Denis (Moderator)*

## 1:00 PM

### **LUNCH PLENARY SESSION**

**SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM AMBASSADOR PATRICK GASPARD**

# PROGRAM

## 2:30 PM

### CONCURRENT SESSIONS II

#### **FORSAKE NOT YOUR FOREBEARS**

State Rep. Dotie Joseph, State Rep. Marie Paule Woodson, Mayor Alix Desulme, Palm Beach County Commissioner Mack Bernard (Panelists) | *Former Miami Shores Councilwoman Katia St. Fleur (Moderator)*

#### **FULFILLING OUR FREEDOM: POWER, BUSINESS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Eric Knowles, Beatrice Louissaint, Lory Malebranche, D.J. Neree, Djenane St-Fleur (Panelists) | *Jeff Lozama (Moderator)*

#### **FULL, FERTILE AND FRUITFUL: COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLNESS**

Dr. Joseph Durandis, Dr. Deborah Gracia, Dr. Patricia Jeudin (Panelists) | *Dr. M. Sandra Severe (Moderator)*

#### **FERVOR, FIRE AND FAITH: NAVIGATING THE NEW WAVE OF MIGRATION**

Featuring special immigrant testimonials of Sant La clients: Ricardo Timé and Shirley Dieudoné | Clarel Cyriaque, Esq., Steven Forester, Esq., Nadine Gedeon, Esq., Frandley Julien, Esq., (Panelists) | *Narinah Jean-Baptiste, Esq. (Moderator)*

## 4:15 PM

### CLOSING PLENARY SESSION

#### **DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT: WE ARE A FORCE WHEN WE ARE TOGETHER**

Prime Minister Michelle Pierre Louis (Presenter) | Jean Ganou Belizaire, Naed Jasmin Dezire, Regine Labrousse, Dr. Guerda Nicolas, Tessa Petit (Panelists) | *Michelle Austin Pamies, Esq. (Moderator)*

## 5:30 PM

### RECAP, NEXT STEPS AND CLOSING REMARKS

## 6:00 PM

### HAITIAN VIBES: COCKTAIL RECEPTION AND NETWORKING

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DEMOCRACY**

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# HAITIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY AGENDA CONFERENCE

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