



Haïtian Studies Association

Association des Études Haïtiennes

Asosyasyon Etid Ayisyen

EXECUTIVE BOARD HAITIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION NOMINEES

BOARD MEMBER NOMINEES

MYRTHA DÉSULMÉ

I am a daughter of the Haitian Diaspora whose father left Haiti, like so many, during the harrowing years of the Papa Doc holocaust. Though I left Haiti at the age of 3, and grew up between Paris and Jamaica, my father's love and feelings of patriotism for the land he left behind was transferred to me almost by osmosis, as he never allowed his children to feel that they were anything other than Haitian, or to forget that they had much to be proud of. Even when he was offered an honorary Jamaican citizenship by the Jamaican government, he declined the offer, as he wished to remain Haitian. He also communicated to us, that all of the privileges we were fortunate enough to receive should only be taken as a platform, which provided a precious opportunity to assist our homeland.

In Jamaica, my father was able to rebuild the plastics factory he had had to leave behind in Haiti. After completing high school in Paris, I studied Spanish and German in Spain and Germany. I also studied at the University of the West Indies (UWI) in Jamaica, from which I transferred to Georgetown University in Washington D.C. I unfortunately was not able to complete my studies there, as the serious economic and political challenges, which Jamaica faced under Prime Minister Michael Manley's regime, prompted our father to ask the children who were studying abroad to return to Jamaica to take charge of some parts of the family businesses, which included the plastics factory, an import-export office in Miami, and a hotel on the North Coast of Jamaica.

Though I later took some Business and Management courses, as well as some courses in African, West Indian, and Afro-American Literature, the ongoing business pressures never permitted me to return full-time, and finish my degree, though I have always longed to find the time to do so.

I was, in fact, planning to start a degree in Haitian Studies at the University of the West Indies in September, but had to postpone it until next year to come to India for a couple of months, from where I am presently writing to you. The reason I plan to put together this course, which does not yet exist as a degree per se at UWI, is that I have created an organization called 'The Haiti-Jamaica

Society' (HJS), of which I am President. One of the aims of the Society is to create a Centre for Haitian Studies at The University of the West Indies.

I consequently decided that I should be the first person to actually earn this degree in Haitian Studies, by putting together a course of study, which includes all of the historical, literary, and Social Sciences courses relating to Haiti available at the university. That decision was also driven by the fact that the OAS has launched an initiative to integrate the Haitian universities into the University of the West Indies. I was the only Interpreter at the conference held to promote this initiative, translating for both sides from French to English and from English to French, which means that I effectively became the link between all parties. Given that this important initiative ties in with The Haiti-Jamaica Society's Mission Statement, this prompted me to plan to formalize my involvement in the project through the aforementioned degree course.

In my work as a Consultant, Resource Person, and Advocate, I have found that there is an enormous amount of interest in Haiti, within the Caribbean, and the international community. Haiti is truly the Caribbean's last frontier. Many are mystified by her complexities, while at the same time being conscious of her cultural significance. This has led them to be hungry for an understanding of the dynamics which shape her.

In all of my writings, lectures and interviews, I have tried to redeem the image of Haiti, and enlighten the audience, thereby bringing Haiti out of darkness and isolation, and dispelling myths and prejudices. I have also maintained the line that Haitians are a great people who have accomplished feats, which to this day, remain unparalleled in human history; and that if they unite, and are left alone to create the right circumstances, can do so again. My greatest ambition is to dedicate myself to the struggle against poverty and injustice in Haiti, and to place all of my experience, skills, knowledge, and exposure, to the reconstruction of our homeland.

In closing, I would like to mention, that I am presently researching a book I am writing, which combines a biography of my father within the context of the historical relationship between Haiti and Jamaica, and an analysis of the Haitian situation, with a view to finding solutions, (some of these ideas being gleaned from my father's economic and political ideology, and business expertise). The postponement of the degree studies I plan to undertake would therefore ironically give me more time to acclimatize myself to the Board's activities, dedicate myself to my assignments, and even help to shape the course I am putting together.

ALLISON E. FRANCIS

This letter is an expression of my keen interest in joining the Haitian Studies Executive Board. I am an assistant professor of English at Chaminade University of Honolulu, and I was the former Department Coordinator/Chair. I became a member of HSA in the late 1990s, and I have maintained my respect for and love of Haiti and Haitian issues even when I have not been an active member.

I have been engaged in research and creative pursuits throughout my teaching career which range from sexuality in African American literature to the historiography of Vodou—topics reflected in my poetry as well. Most of my conference papers focus on Haitian culture—specifically, traditional Vodou dances, Vodou rituals, and most recently, Haitian folklorique traditions. I continue to stay current with Haitian politics even as I examine Haiti’s vibrant past in my papers and essays.

But rather than devote myself exclusively to Haitian studies, I actively participate in community events and lecture series wherein I discuss Afro-Caribbean and African American issues and contributions. In 2006, I published a paper on the Bermuda-born slave, Mary Prince, in the anthology, Swinging Her Breasts at History: Language, Body and the Caribbean Woman’s Text, and I presented a “brown bag” lecture on the nineteenth-century Jamaican healer and entrepreneur, Mary Seacole, at The Center for Biographical Research in Honolulu. That year I also co-conducted a poetry writing workshop at Bamboo Ridge’s Writers Institute on the University of Hawai’i Manoa campus. In addition, the directors of the Women’s Resource and Research Center at Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia, invited me to give a talk and poetry reading in 2007, detailing my research on literary representations of the Black female body from the nineteenth century to the era of hip hop, as part of their Toni Cade Bambara Liberation Lecture Series.

My current research and recent publication due this Fall, “The Culture of Sentiments and the Black Body in the Nineteenth-Century Literary Marketplace,” will be anthologized in Imag(in)ing America: The Black Body in Literature. In this chapter, I expand on salient aspects of my dissertation which was a comparative study of four Caribbean and African American women—Mary Prince, Harriet A. Jacobs, Mary Seacole and Harriet A. Wilson—whose narratives were written in the concise but volatile period between 1830 and 1865. Moreover, I am submitting an article on Jean Léon Destiné and Lina Mathon Blanchet for publication in the next Journal of Haitian Studies. I believe my varied fields of interests and publications will give me fresh, new perspectives through which to examine the future direction of HSA.

Therefore, if I am chosen to sit on the Executive Board for the Haitian Studies Association, I pledge to be an active, vocal member, supporting HSA’s mission, policies and programs, both in the U.S. and abroad. I will recruit new members and look forward to co-creating new programs and profitable fund-raising activities. Since I sit on the board of two non-profits here in the Hawaiian Islands that provide art and medical programs for children and youths, I am no stranger to the expectations and demands that Board members field and I look forward to meeting these challenges.

Truly, I am excited by the opportunity to commune directly and frequently with other board members who share my love of Haiti and Haitian studies. I am also committed to building strong ties between island cultures which, is why I think my board membership could benefit and enhance a more balanced knowledge of Haiti in the Pacific. Thank you for your consideration.

JEAN-DANY JOACHIM

Jean-Dany Joachim is the current poet populist of Cambridge MA. He grew up among poets in his native Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Jean-Dany wrote his first poem at age 14. His writing found its voice in the never-ending, complex reality of his country. After moving to the United States nearly two decades ago, he began writing in English, while at the same time exploring poetry in other languages. Jean-Dany has translated poetry from and into: Spanish, French, Haitian Creole, and English. As the creator and producer of the City Night Reading Series, he brings together poets, writers, performers and lovers of literature for the celebration of the art of word in the Boston and NYC areas. Jean-Dany was a 2007 finalist for the first Cambridge Poet Populist. He is the author of *Chen Plenn – Leta*, and his work has appeared in anthologies and numerous literary magazines. He is a current staff and adjunct professor at Bunker Hill Community College.

PATTI MARXSEN

Patti M. Marxsen is an American writer and former French teacher whose articles, stories, and book reviews often focus on Francophone literature and culture. From 1996 to 2006, she was associated with Hospital Albert Schweitzer in Deschapelles, Haiti, in a variety of functions: liaison with foreign visitors, communications consultant, contributing editor to the newsletter, and secretary of the North American Alumni Association (1998-2006). From 2000-2007, she managed publications for an international peace institute based in Boston, the Boston Research Center for the 21st century. Regarding her writing, recent articles include “The Map Within: Place, Displacement, and the Long Shadow of History in the Work of Edwidge Danticat,” (*Journal of Haitian Studies*, Spring 2005), which was selected for the anthology, *Beyond Revolution: 200 years of Haitian History and Culture*, (forthcoming, Indiana University Press). Marxsen’s collection of travel essays, *Island Journeys: Exploring the Legacy of France*, published by Alondra Press in 2008, includes an essay on Haiti, “Haiti’s Heavenly Waters,” which was originally published in the JOHS. Also in 2008, she was honored with a Special Mention in the Pushcart Prize competition for “Alone in Amsterdam,” an essay published in *Fourth Genre* (spring 2007) and her short story collection, *Tales from the Heart of Haiti*, was short listed for the Paris Prize for Fiction.

Marxsen’s articles, stories, and reviews (art and books) related to Haiti have appeared in *The Caribbean Writer*, *The French Review*, the *Journal of Haitian Studies*, and the *Women’s Review of Books* (forthcoming review of *Love, Anger, Madness* by Marie Chauvet). Marxsen lives in Switzerland with her husband where she is currently translating a biography of Dr. Albert Schweitzer and working on a historical novel set in Haiti entitled *The Cry of the Peacock*.

MARY PROCOPIO

Mary Procopio, Ethnomusicologist/Flutist; Assistant Professor of Music and Director of Instrumental Music at Mott Community College, Michigan. My interest in Haiti began as a graduate student at Michigan State University. I began conducting research in Haiti and the Haitian diaspora in 2003, and studied Haitian Creole through the Boston Creole Institute and at MSU through a Title IV FLAS fellowship. My area of expertise is Haitian classical music, especially that which is inspired by Vodou ceremonial music. While my graduate degrees are in music, my interest in Haiti is all-encompassing, including its religion, culture, identity issues, and the educational system.

During the summertime I try to make the pilgrimage to Saut d' Eau, and spend several weeks teaching at the Holy Trinity music camp in Leogane and traveling to camps in Port-au-Prince (City Soleil) and Jacmel. I have presented papers and lecture recitals about Haiti at national conferences of the Haitian Studies Association, KOSANBA, the Society for Ethnomusicology, the College Music Society, and the American Folklore Society. My doctoral document examines Haitian classical music for flute, and my masters thesis addresses ways that Haitian musicians and educators challenge cultural ambivalence in Haiti and the Haitian diaspora. In 2004 I founded the group Z.A.M.A. (*Zanmi Ansanm pou Mizik Ayisyen*) to perform and promote the music of Haitian composers. We have established several scholarship funds at music and cultural institutions in Haiti through CD sales. Currently, I am working on a project to raise funds to bring several Haitian teachers from the Holy Trinity Music School to MCC for a four-month residency during winter semester 2010.

I would be honored to serve the membership of the HSA by serving as a member of the Board of Directors. Thank you for your time and consideration.

JEAN MARIE THEODAT

Mes enseignements ont trait principalement à la géographie politique et à la géographie économique et sociale. Je suis chargé du cours magistral en Aires Economiques et Culturelles pour les Master II depuis trois ans. Mes centres d'intérêt couvrent le Nouveau Monde, la Caraïbe en particulier. J'encadre des travaux de Master ayant trait à la géographie économique, politique, culturelle et régionale de la Caraïbe. Mes plus récents travaux portant sur les relations entre Haïti et la République dominicaine au niveau de la frontière terrestre qui traverse cette île et la coupe en deux nations. Je participe également à l'analyse de la vulnérabilité particulière des populations par rapport aux aléas climatiques et telluriques, en Guadeloupe et en Haïti, en particulier. Mes activités me conduisent à nouer des relations étroites avec les collègues américanistes des différents terrains concernés. La FLACSO (Faculté Latino américaine de Sciences Sociales) en République dominicaine, la University of West Indies (Jamaïque), State University of Indiana (USA), l'Université de la Havane, l'Université des Antilles et de la Guyane et l'Université d'Etat d'Haïti. Mon intérêt pour le HSA tient à la possibilité d'y rencontrer des intellectuels et des chercheurs sensibles à des thématiques voisines des miennes et d'échanger nos points de vue de façon régulière dans un cadre intellectuellement stimulant et chaleureux.

GINA A. ULYSEE

My dedicated interest in the material and symbolic politics of everyday life as manifested in the Caribbean and the black Diaspora drive my pursuits in Haitian Studies. Issues pertaining to feminist methodology and epistemology are also central to my work. While my research agenda remains grounded in anthropology, cultural studies and history, my scholarship tends to have three overarching objectives. First, I seek to recognize and legitimize the value of organic and other marginal intellectuals, bringing them into conversation with more established scholarship. Second, I seek to illuminate the plurality of Haitian subjectivities by challenging contemporary and archaic stereotypes of Haitians through critical re-readings of present and past cultural practices. Last, with my emphasis on praxis, I use various methods designed to engage in public scholarship on Haiti that both disseminates knowledge circulating in the academy to a broader audience and brings into the academy dialogues that tend to be relegated to the cultural margins.

My first book, *Downtown Ladies: Informal Commercial Importers, A Haitian Anthropologist and Self-Making in Jamaica* is a black transnational feminist ethnography focused on the work and strategic self-making practices of female international traders known as Informal Commercial Importers (ICIs). In this work, I positioned myself to explicate how “Haitian” is coded and deconstruct its multiple significations. I have published several articles and numerous poems that are explicitly on Haiti. My future projects include a book of essays, *My Body as an Archive* on being a Haitian feminist anthropologist, a monograph-- *They Come by Sea: Haitian Refugees and the United States*--a cultural history of the Haitian refugee dilemma as well as ethnographic memoir, *Loving Haiti, Loving Vodou* that offer analysis of geopolitics from a subjective perspective.

I am theoretically and practically committed to blurring genres and crossing disciplinary boundaries to construct and circulate new narratives of Haiti. In so doing, part of my aim is to methodologically engage the visceral that is too often absent in structural analyses and challenge the homogeneous disembodied subject that is erroneously characteristic of Haiti especially in the social sciences. My work on Haiti also includes performance and alternative forms of ethnographic writing, which I have been invited to present in numerous academic venues, including international conferences in the last decade. Next year, I am making my first foray into theatre with the impending staging of my one-woman show “Because when God is too Busy: Haiti, me and THE WORLD.”

While I am determined to produce rigorous and relevant work that contributes to Haitian Studies, I also have worked to contribute to the field in pragmatic ways. Besides fund raising for a couple not for profits, ensuring Haitian Studies is visible at various conferences, with the Haiti Illumination Project (HIP), I have also helped to support the making of the new documentary PotoMitan and its dissemination. As a board member, I would focus on the various ways HSA could facilitate the mentoring of junior scholars. I strongly believe this task is especially crucial to the future development of both Haitian Studies as a field and the association.

STUDENT BOARD MEMBER NOMINEES

CRYSTAL ANDREA FELIMA

Crystal Andrea Felima is a graduate student at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York earning a Masters in Professional Studies in Africana Studies. She received her Bachelor of Arts in African American Studies, minor in Political Science at the University of South Carolina in 2008. She is currently writing her Master thesis on environmental hazards and disaster management in Haiti, specifically using Gonavies and the hurricanes events of 2004 and 2008 as a case study.

Felima's research interests include poverty, environmental management, and the impact of natural hazards in Haiti; and poverty and social impact analysis in African American populations- particularly in Southern and inner-city communities.

After her Masters, Felima hopes to enter a Phd program in Anthropology to continue her contribution to Haitian scholarship.

ERIN DURBAN

I am interested in furthering mission of the Haitian Studies Association as a graduate student representative and supporting the work of other emerging scholars. I joined the HSA when I started graduate school, and the organization has been vital for me to connect with other people conducting various kinds of work on Haiti and the diaspora. I have also attended the Haitian Creole Language and Culture Institute at UMass Boston the last two summers, which has additionally introduced me to the work of other emerging scholars in Haitian Studies. I have studied Haitian migration to the United States for the last five years and am currently researching the migration of queer Haitians within and outside of Haiti. While I have not yet served as a board or committee member for the HSA, I am familiar with the work required of board members from past service on department and university committees as well as academic and community boards. I am very excited about the opportunity to further the great work of such a outstanding organization. Thank you for your consideration!

JAMES ELISCAR

Coming from Haiti, and now living a very socially, culturally, and racially complex society, it is a duty from my part to educate others and contribute to un-silence the past of Haiti – its peoples, culture, religion, history – in Western historicity, and to advocate on behalf of its people and its worldwide diasporic citizenry/ community, and to do so by disseminating knowledge and working closely with those who have a passion and are willing to carry out the tasks with great diligence. Having the opportunity to join the Board of Haitian Studies Association, as a graduate student, will provide me a structured framework to carry out the tasks of disseminating knowledge and educating others about Haiti; and it will give me a platform to voice concerns and advocate for issues of great urgency such as poverty, health care, economic development, environmental disasters and degradation, and so forth. Lastly, having the opportunity to join the Board will give me an exceptional opportunity of being surrounded by many different expertise on Haiti from which I can deepen my knowledge about other aspects of Haitian Studies and having a greater understanding about issues affecting the lives of the people in and out of the country in ways that I have not thought about.

I have been living in the United States since 2002, and my views, as they relate to Haitian Studies in the larger Western thinking, have been shaped by the United States in many ways. I am very involved in the Haitian community of the Greater Boston area and also at home through student-led projects and community initiatives. Most of my research and studies are focused on Haiti, Caribbean region and Latin America. My studies and research focus mostly on forced migration and environmentally-induced migration, environmental refugees, environmental disasters, economic development and integrated approach to development in developing countries and I have a keen interest in development of alternative/ renewable sources of energy and energy technologies adaptable to developing countries. I am currently working as a research assistant at the William Monroe Trotter Institute for the Study of Black Culture at the University of Massachusetts Boston and I am a graduate student in the MSPA International Relations Program at the John W. McCormack Graduate School at the University.

SOPHONIE JOSEPH

I am currently a Master of Urban Planning graduate student at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor slated to graduate in May 2010. I am also in the midst of applying to doctoral programs for admission in Fall 2010. My academic disciplines on the undergraduate and graduate level include Urban & Regional Planning and Women's & Gender Studies. However, I have specific expertise on the topics of land use and environmental planning, international development, housing & community development and urban sociology.

My academic and work experience has provided me opportunities to get involved in issues affecting the Haitian community. As an undergraduate, I was an active member and board member of the Haitian Association at Rutgers University. I also interned at the New Jersey Immigration Policy Network within the Haitian Outreach Program. In both roles, I gained experience in event planning, activism and advocacy. As a senior class project, I developed and presented an Introduction to Homebuying Course in Creole at a local Haitian Community Center. This academic project demonstrated to me my ability to utilize academia for broader community uplift. These and other experiences outlined in my curriculum vitae molded me into a confident leader and effective communicator in English, Creole or French.

Although I recently became a Haitian Studies Association member, I have been passionate about Haitian culture, social, economic, and political conditions for many years. I hope that I will be able to channel my passion into the work to be carried out as a Graduate Student Board Member. Thank you for your time.