Chronicle of Slave Revolutions in the Americas
History of Slave revolt in the Americas
Maxime Coles MD

All societies practicing slavery will have to deal with slave revolts because there is that desire for Freedom in any human being. One can express it in their songs or their story-telling nights. It becomes part of their culture and an art in knowing how to implant it on others with the same background.

History is full of examples of such revolts. When a Roman slave named Spartacus (73-71 BC) rose against abuses committed by the Roman Empire or a Scandinavian Slave Tunni, in the 9th century, revolted against the Swedish Monarchy, you can also understand well how the slaves of Santo Domingo, Bookman, Dessalines and others may have felt in the 18th century (1791) against the French Imperialism of Napoleon Bonaparte. The French revolution indeed bought to us the words of Liberty and Equality for all.

Muhammed led the east African slaves in the Zani Rebellion in Iraq to revolt against the Abbasid Caliphate. Nanny of the Maroons revolted against the British in Jamaica. In continental United States, Denmark Vesey rebellion in South Carolina.

In this number

- Chronicle of Slave rebellions, Maxime Coles, MD
- La chronique de Rony Jean-Mary, M.D.
- La chronique de Reynald Altema, M.D.
- Thank you to Stéphanie Hall

- Pour la fête des pères
- Décès
- And more...
Ancient Sparta had serfs called helots who rebelled against the Spartans as reported by Herodotus. English peasants revolted in 1381 to obtain reform in the feudalism system in England and increase the right of the serfs and Richard II agreed to their requests. In Russia, the slaves were called Kholops and slavery remained an institution until 1723 when Peter the Great converted the slaves into serfs. They became outlaws called “Cossacks” living in the southern steppes. Numerous rebellions and Cossacks uprisings with Ivan Bolotnikov (1606), Stenka Razin (1667), Kondraty Butavin (1707) are some of the many hundred outbreaks across Russia.

Numerous African slave revolts took place in America during the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. More than 250 uprising have been documented. Slaves like Gabriel Prosser (Richmond, VA 1800), Denmark Vesey (Charleston SC 1822) Nat Turner (South Hampton County VA 1831) merit their named to be mentioned and this is the story of the most striking revolts that I want to bring to light.

I have taken solemnly that task to bring to light the most distinctive slave revolutions in the Americas and chose to review some of the most epic African slave revolts which have marked forever the new world in this “Chronicle of African Slave revolts in the Americas”. I am sure you will find time to appreciate what our ancestors have done to make Haiti a free Nation for the Haitians.

This month, we will talk about the 1781-1804, the Haitian slave revolution and the only successful slave revolution in the Caribbean.

The Haitian Revolution was the first slave revolution with a successful outcome, leading Haiti as a free black republic and paving the way for the emancipation of the slaves in the French territories and in the world. The movement may have started in the mid-18th century but this is in 1791 that workers on plantations in Haiti (Santo Domingo) overwhelmed their owners to take control of the island. They achieved emancipation in 1794 and successfully confronted the army of Napoleon years later to become an independent nation. The old French colony became the nation of Haiti, land of the brave for the free slaves and the free persons of color.

The end of the French rule and the abolition of slavery was a menace for European and British/American interests in the hemisphere because the Caribbean economic development was contingent upon European’s demand for sugar cane, coffee, cocoa, indigo production. Although white colonists and black slaves come often to violent conflicts, Saint Domingue was a society seething with hatred. The “little colons” were jealous of the rich colonists and land owners, the mulattoes wanted to better their rights and the slaves could not stand anymore all the abuses in the colony. Runaway slaves, “Maroons” were living on the margins of the larges plantations or far in the mountains so they can attack at will and steal from their old masters through violent raids.

Among the whites also, they have different classes: the rich whites were the colonists owning lands while looking down at the little whites born in the colony or working for them. Other classes did not like each other as well, the mulattoes, other creoles, and the slaves. All bring a diversity in the colony while the maroons are kept at large, away from the in house-slaves or the field-slaves which were also mistreated. Brief, a society with hatred, prone to violent conflicts.

The first effective maroon chief was a charismatic Voodoo priest, Francois Mackandal which was able to establish a network of maroons to plan meeting leading to a rebellion which lasted from 1751 to 1758. He was captured in 1758 and burned in public. At his death, many other maroons continued the fight. The largest plantations were in the north of the island and the slaves were to a ratio 10:1 with a higher rate of mortality. They kept their African culture often from Yoruba, Nigeria which become the Benin of our modern days and married among them. Their kids born in the colony, were called “creoles” and the kids born from the union of a white colon and a slave were called “mulattoes”.

Haitian Slave Revolution in the Caribbean (1791-1804)

Maxime Coles MD
The colons tried to separate those different entities but most slaves talked “patois or creole” language and kept bounding. The slaves also developed their own religion with a mixture between the imposed Catholicism and their west African Voodoo.

Not too many knew of the existence of a slave named Padre Jean (Padrejean) in 1676 who attempted to overthrow his slave master in the goal of fermenting a revolt in the town of Port-de-Paix. After freeing the slaves, Padre Jean fled to Tortuga Island (Ile de la Tortue) where he lived until 1679 when the French discovered his retreat and hired some maroons to hunt him down and kill him.

We cannot talk about revolt without mentioning Dutty Bookman. Bookman was born originally in “Senegambia”, presently Senegal and Gambia where he was captured and sold as a slave to a habitation in Jamaica. He soon became a maroon and took refuge in Haiti. Many believe that he was given the name holly man (Book Man = man of the book) because he thought others how to read the Quran as a Muslim cleric while he was a coach driver. Others believe that he became also a Voodoo priest (Hougan). Recent researches have shown him along with Cecile Fatiman (Voodoo Mambo). They both become leaders of the maroons allowing them to preside in a Voodoo ceremony at Bois Caiman on the 14th of August 1791, in the north of the country.

That ceremony may have served as a catalyst to the slave revolt. During that ceremony, both prophesied that Jean Francois, Biassou and Jeannot would become the leaders of the revolt. An animal was sacrificed and an oath was taken while the priest and the priestess encouraged the listeners to take revenge against their French oppressors. Many Christian organizations saw in this ceremony a “pact with the devil”. It appears that the blood of an animal was offered to the attendees for consummation, sealing their fate. A week later, 1800 plantations were destroyed and 1000 slaveholders killed. Bookman was quickly captured and beheaded by the French planters on the 7th of November 1791.

George Biassou also called later Jorge Biassou, a son of slaves, was 50 when he joined the rebels and assumed the leadership of the revolutionary movement with Jean Francois and Jeannot, commanding 40,000 ex-slaves to start burning plantations and killing white colonists. The historian Thomas Madiou in his writings states that Biassou tent was filled with dead men’ bones, kittens, snakes and other African “fetishes”. Biassou tried to write many proposals with the help of Jean Francois to end the revolt in exchange for freedom to all slaves in the colony but France refused to compromise.

When all negotiations failed, the Spanish Governor Garcia jumped on the opportunity to recruit Biassou and his men under the Spanish Crown army, known as the “Black Auxiliaries army”. Then, Toussaint Breda made his entrance by joining the forces of Biassou as a “doctor” to the troops. He bought support the leadership of the rebels and mainly discussed strategy. Commending the Black Auxiliaries army, Biassou became a French speaking general with loyalty to the Spanish Crown and never returned to the French army even after the National Convention abolished Slavery on the insistence of Sonthonax. Contrarily, Toussaint switched allegiance to France although it would eventually mean to fight against Biassou. Indeed, in 1795, when the Black Auxiliaries army was disbanded, General Biassou was sent to Florida which was then part of the Spanish territory of Cuba. There, he was placed in charge of the black militia.

Francois Dominique Toussaint Louverture was around 15 when Mackandal died and 48 when Bookman lost his life. He did not participate in the ceremony at Bois Caiman. Born possibly in 1743, or maybe 1746 on the habitation Breda, near Cap Haiti, property which belong to Comte Noe. Later, this property was sold to Bayon of Libertate. He kept the official name of “Toussaint Breda” until he became more famous for his military tactics. Then they surnamed him “Toussaint L’Ouverture”. It is said that during his childhood, he heritages the name of “Fatras-Baton” suggesting that he may have been small and weak. He was a Free slave during the time of the 1791 revolution and practiced the art of manipulating medicinal plants to treat horses and humans on the habitation Breda. He was a coachman and earn money allowing him to accumulate wealth and properties at Ennery.

With his small stature, he owed his education to his god-father Pierre Baptiste Simon, also a free-person of color. By the age of 20, he was fluent in French, Creole and was able to communicate in Latin. He enjoyed repeating the words of Epictetus, a Greek philosopher who has lived most of his life as a slave. He read Machiavelli and Abbe Raynal who through their writings on slavery have also influenced Toussaint Louverture speeches. He may have also benefited from the teachings of the Jesuits missionaries as well.

Toussaint Breda as a free-man, was a Jacobin who
first fought with the Spanish against the French and then switched allegiance to the French when slavery was abolished. He fought the Spaniards and the English on behalf of Saint Domingue. He helped transform the slave insurgency of 1791 into a revolutionary movement. He became instrumental in taking control of the whole island to create a de-facto autonomous colony against the wishes of Napoleon Bonaparte. He restored the plantation system using a "paid labor system" and negotiated trade treaties between the United States and United Kingdom while he maintained a well-disciplined army. He promulgated an autonomist constitution in 1801 for the colony and self-proclaimed himself "Governor-for-life". He established Catholicism as the only official religion of the land.

Little is known for sure about Toussaint Breda and his parents. Biographers claim that family traditions named his Grand-father as “Gaou Guinou”, a son of King Allada (Arrada) of the kingdom of Great Allada (Arrada), believed to be the actual Benin. Toussaint mother was the second wife of Gaou Guinou and Toussaint was the eldest of seven (7) children. We know also that he married Suzanne Simone Baptiste probably his cousin who gave him two sons Isaac and Saint-Jean. He adopted Placide, a son born from a previous union of Suzanne with a mulattoe, Seraphin Leclerc and had two more children from extra-marital affairs. At the end of his life, he told General Caffarelli that he fathered 16 children with multiple women. Toussaint was considered a devout Roman Catholic and did not practice Voodoo. He may have been a freemason because of the symbol he used on his signature.

Through his military and political career, Toussaint has always used secretaries to prepare most of his correspondence. He may have been a well-known leader but he developed a lasting friendship with Jean Baptiste Bailey (1746-1805), born on the island of Goree, in Senegal and raised from the rank of slave in Saint Domingue to Captain of Infantry and finally member of the National Convention and the Council of the Five Hundred in France until 1797. A surname of “Mars” was given to him and survived Toussaint in Haiti’s fight for freedom. He returned to Haiti with the army of Charles Leclerc in 1802 until his arrest and deportation to the fortress of Belle Ile where he remained prisoner until his death in 1805. Their military and political knowledge saved the gains of the first black insurrection (Nov 1791). Toussaint used to say: “I was born a slave but nature gave me the soul of a free man”. When he joined the

revolutionary troops of George Biassou as a “doctor” to the troops, he was given a small detachment under his command. He became involved in the negotiations between the rebels and the French Governor Blanchelande to provide better conditions for the slaves until the offers were rejected. He became instrumental in avoiding the massacre of many white prisoners by Biassou.

The year 1792 saw Toussaint Breda as a leader helping an alliance between the rebels and the Spanish forces to form the West Condon, at the Post of La Tannerie, separating the rebels from the colonial French troops. He started to play an important role throughout the revolution until finally, La Tannerie was taken by the French troops led by General Etienne Laveaux and through his military tactics, Toussaint was recognized as a significant military leader. He was given the name of “Toussaint Louverture”. Others believe that he received this name because of the space he exhibited between his upper front teeth. In any way, Toussaint has begun to use the language of Freedom and Equality associated with the French revolution and become committed to the idea of a complete abolition of slavery. He addressed the rebels saying: “I have undertaken vengeance and I want Liberty and Equality to reign over Saint Domingue”. On the same day Sonthonax proclaimed the emancipation for all slaves and on the 4th of February 1794, the French Revolutionary Government in France proclaimed the abolition of Slavery.

The French revolution may be regarded as the most important event in modern history. Even more radical than the English or American Revolution, it bears more impact on 19th century Europe. The ultimate fall of the Bourbons behind the liberalism and nationalism, resonated throughout Europe and later the major socialist revolutions of the twentieth century in Russia, China and even Cuba were inspired from the French example. Santo Domingo represented the world’s larger sugar producer for many countries with around 1800 plantations. It is believed that when the revolution started in 1791, half of a million of slaves were living on the island. The Haitian revolution started when the White French Colonists wanted the independence after the fall of the monarchy in France. The slaves have other goals and started burning plantations allowing 100,000 slaves to join the rank of the rebels. Toussaint was one of the leaders of the rebellion but only took
part in talks and supported more the Spaniards in bringing his input to the revolt as we already reported earlier. Soon, he moved to the eastside of Santo Domingo and took over the territory to free the slaves.

Based on the French Enlighten of Rousseau and Diderot, the general Assembly made drastic changes in the French Laws to publish the declaration for the Rights of Man and the Citizen, declaring “all men free and equal” in 1789. Dante and Robespierre were instrumental in ending Slavery in the French colonies. They conclude that a country like France could not tolerate slavery in his outside territories. The white land owners found in this declaration an opportunity to break tie with the Metropole. Similarly, many Mulattoes, sons and daughters of the white colons who were studying in France, wanted to bring the news to the colonies with the hope of obtaining more freedom. Especially, two of them, Vincent Oge and Jean-Baptiste Chavannes, who jumped on the opportunity to return to Santo Domingo and to vindicate their rights, the same way the white colons had ideas of separation to become independent from the metropole. They wanted also the mulattoes to have more rights and especially Chavannes who tried to include in his proposal all slaves but Oge opposed the idea. There were about 28,000 free blacks and mulattoes in the colony and many of whom owned slaves while there were around 500,000 slaves.

Jean Baptiste Chavannes also volunteered to fight with the US continental army and distinguished himself during many military operations in Virginia, New York and more during the retreat at Savannah, GA, in December 1778, battle in which our future King Henry Christophe was 14 and also participated in the battle while drumming and carrying the flag of the French battalion. In any way, the mulattoes took the opportunity to raise an army of 1000 men to fight the colonists. They found resistance and many slaves supported their cause in participating to the insurrection.

After years of armed combats, the mulatto’s forces were defeated and many took refuge in the East part of the island where they were captured by the Spanish army in the area of the actual town of Hinche. The Assembly asked for their extradition according to the treaty. Vincent Oge and Jean Baptiste Chavannes were delivered to the French colonists on 21 December 1790. Two months later, both were sentenced to be “hammered to death” (Supplice of the Wheel) in front of the authorities of Cap-Francais (Cap Haiti). Chavannes showed great courage protesting until the end against the oppression of the people of African descent. Although the mulattoes and slaves continued the fight for more rights in the colony, they eventually in 1798, surrendered to the authorities to put an end to the hostilities.

Meanwhile, the white colons realized their inability to become independent from France and were forced to acclaim with open arms the 60,000 French soldiers sent by Napoleon with a “Governor” Leger Felicite Sonthonax to re-establish control on the island. The Assembly granted civil and political rights to the free-men of color in Mach 1792 and Sonthonax abolished slavery again, in the Northern part of the island of Santo Domingo. The colonists did not appreciate, that decision. They needed the slaves to work on their fields. The European countries and the United States were also shocked. So when France declared war to Britain and Spain in 1793, these white colonists, already unhappy with the ideas of Sonthonax, offered the sovereignty of the island to the British. The rebels did not request independance from France and most professed loyalty to France.

The British hesitated, claiming a bad example for their own colonies in the Caribbean but soon realized that such British campaign of Santo Domingo ended in a complete debacle and cost them thousands of dead. Spain who has control of the east part of the island joined also in the conflict against France. The Spanish forces invaded and were joined by the slave’s forces against only 3500 French soldiers left by August 1793. In Jeremie, 600 British soldiers landed and were greeted by a French population screaming: “Vivent les Anglais”. It did not take long for the main French base in Mole St Nicholas to surrender to the Royal Navy, peacefully allowing British authorities to restore Slavery. It is then that Sonthonax and Polverel of the second commission, abolished slavery over the entire territory, in August 1793 in order to save the colony.

Sonthonax and Polverel elected to delegate a free black officer, Jean Baptiste Bailey (friend of Toussaint Louverture), Jean Baptiste Mills, a mulattoe and Louis Duffay to plead the cause of the colony at the National Convention. Louis Duffay gave a brilliant speech arguing that abolishing slavery was the only way to keep the colony under French control. The convention deputies agree to state that all men living in the
colonies without distinction of color were French citizens with all the rights granted by the constitution. Two French constitutions of 1793 and 1795, both include an abolition of the “slavery act”.

We know well that Toussaint Louverture, for reasons that remain obscure, decided to re-join the French army in May 1794 stating that he has forgiven his French white masters because his goal was to fight for the rights of the slaves. The abolition of slavery paved his way back to the French Army. Although, the Spaniards were not defeated, they pulled back East and Spain ceded the west portion of Santo Domingo to the French in 1795. Toussaint re-iterated that he was not seeking for independence from France but urged the surviving whites and old slave masters to stay in the colony to work with him to rebuild it. Toussaint restored the plantation system and wrote the first constitution of the colony in 1801.

In the south, Rigaud has taken back Leogane from the British with an army of mulattoes and blacks forcing the enemy to retreat toward Port-au-Prince where most of the 600 English men perished of Yellow fever (black vomit). Rigaud took over Tiburon by surprise but failed to capture Port-au-Prince on Christmas 1794. The army of mulattoes and blacks took no prisoners and executed any British soldier or sailor on their way.

The British launched “Operation Great Push” to reconquer Saint Domingue and the rest of the French west indies, sending the largest ever fleet with 200 ships and 30,000 men only to discover that it was too late. Many British regimens rioted when they learned of being deployed to Santo Domingo. The first fleet wrecked in 1795 but a second fleet reached Barbados in March 1796. Finally, 10,000 British soldiers arrived in Port-au-Prince and remained put to other costal enclaves while Yellow fever continued to claim victims among them.

They tried to direct an offensive against the French forces of Toussaint and Rigaud but they were stopped. Toussaint assaulted Fort Churchill in a ferocious battle under heavy artillery, and his forces were defeated. The morale of the British forces was at a low point and when, in May 1798, Maitland heard that Toussaint Louverture had taken Port-au-Prince, he agrees to meet with him to discuss an armistice. On the 31st of August 1798, an agreement for the British to pull from Santo Domingo was signed. Toussaint in return promised not to help in any slave revolts in Jamaica. After five years of expedition, between 1793 and 1798, the attempt to conquer Santo Domingo has cost the British Treasury 4 million pounds and 100,000 dead or disabled men.

Once the British left, Toussaint turned his attention toward Rigaud who was conspiring against him in the south of Santo Domingo. Rigaud initiated the “war of knives” against Toussaint rules attacking Petit-Goave and Grand-Goave with an army of predominantly of mulattoes taking no prisoners and putting blacks and white under the swords. Although, the United States of America was hostile to Toussaint, they agreed to support him with the deployment of the Frigate USS General Greene in providing fire support while the town of Jacmel was sieged. The ties of Rigaud with France represented a treat to the USA as well. On the 11th of March 1800, Jacmel surrendered and Rigaud fled on the French Schooner La Diana. Toussaint maintained that he remains loyal to France and ruled the island as a dictator.

As a self-educated former domestic slave, Toussaint Louverture like Jean Francois and Biassou whom he fought with for the Spanish Crown, has decided to fight for the French when the British army invaded Santo Domingo, under the condition that all slaves will be set free. Sonthonax had already assured that all slaves be given equal rights and has abolished slavery. In August 1792, Toussaint worked with the French General Etienne Laveaux to ensure that all slaves would be freed and bought his forces over to the French side on 6 May 1794 after the Spanish refused to take steps to end slavery.

Under his military leadership, his forces were made up mostly of former slaves. Toussaint was intelligent, articulate and organized. The island had an effective autonomy and he started eliminating his local enemies. He pursued Sonthonax, then Rigaud and Hedouville until he succeeded. He led a campaign to the east part of the island to free the slaves. After he proclaimed a new constitution for Saint Domingue in 1801 in which he decreed himself” Governor for life”. Napoleon did not appreciate it and dispatched a large expedition of French soldiers led by his brother-in-law, Charles Leclerc to restore French rule and slavery. Leclerc summoned Toussaint to Le Cap and was told to wage “a war to death” with no mercy until the killing of all followers. Numerous French soldiers were accompanied by mulattoes’ troops led by Alexandre Petion and Andre Rigaud both who were defeated by
Toussaint. The French troops arrived on 2 February 1802 at Le Cap and Leclerc summoned Henry Christophe to surrender the town. Christophe refused and set the town in fire when the French troops assaulted. Toussaint failed to show off forcing Leclerc to proclaim Henry Christophe and himself outlaws. He requested that all citizens hunt them down on 17 February 1802. Toussaint wrote a letter to Jean-Jacques Dessalines to outline his plans to defeat the French army but Dessalines never received it. He was busy in Leogane fighting a French regimen prior to burn down the city. The French were expecting all blacks who formed the army of Toussaint to happily go back to slavery. They were also surprised that all white men, women and children who came in contact with Dessalines soldiers, were massacred in Leogane. General Pamphile de la Croix was shocked after seeing the ruins of the town of Leogane. Leclerc ordered four French columns to march toward Gonâives, the headquarter of Toussaint forces. One of the columns was commanded by General Donatien Rochambeau, a supremacist, and a strong supporter of slavery. Toussaint tried to stop them at Ravine-a-Couleuvre in the mountains setting an ambush. His forces lost 800 men in ferocious combat forcing him to pull back while the French army broke through with heavy loss. Toussaint setup camp at the fortress Crete-a-Pierrot which was built by the British forces to afront the French troops. Dessalines was already there to fight the columns and standing with a lit torch on a top of a gunpowder barrel with his men ready to die for liberty. Dessalines attacked the column commanded by General Boudet, inflicting heavy loss while the general was wounded in the fight. The French troops retreated. Another column directed by General Leclerc himself was also forced to retreat. General Dugat was killed in combat and General Leclerc was wounded. The last column commanded by General Rochambeau showed up finally with heavy artillery which dismantled the artillery that Dessalines used but the indigenous rebels kept their grounds and pushed back the last column with heavy loss. Finally, after 21 days of fighting, Dessalines ordered his forces to abandon the positions on the 24th March 1802 because of shortage of ammunition and food. Rochambeau wrote that “this impossible retreat of the indigenous forces entrapped, was an incredible feat of arms”. The French army won but left behind more than 2000 bodies.

After the Crete-a-Pierrot battle, the forces of Toussaint stopped fighting in conventional battles but reverted into guerrilla tactics. The rainy season helping, the mosquitoes brought another outbreak of yellow fever. The French troops were exhausted, fatigued and by the end of March 1802, around 5000 French soldiers have perished from yellow fever while another 5000 were hospitalized.

In April 1802, the situation changed when Henry Christophe along with most of the indigenous army defected to the French. Toussaint Louverture was promised to keep his freedom if he agrees to integrate with his remaining troops to the French army. He agreed on 6 May 1802 after 11 years of wars. Leclerc gave him his word that slavery would not be restored into Saint Domingue. Toussaint was given a plantation at Ennery. We know better the way he was deceived, arrested by the French troops and shipped to France to be a prisoner at Fort-de-Joux, in the Jura Mountains. Dessalines also surrendered in Cap to the French troops and was rewarded the title of Governor of Saint Marc. The surrender of Christophe, Toussaint and Dessalines did not mean the end of the resistance, the guerrilla warfare continued. In retaliation, the French started mass execution by fire squad, hanging, drowning in bags etc. The island became quiet under the Napoleon rule but when it became apparent that slavery was going to be re-instated like it happened in Guadeloupe, the black cultivators revolted. Leclerc realized the impact of Yellow Fever on his men. By the summer of 1802, he had some 8000 soldiers among whom 5000 were of Polish descent and many fought for France in return for the hope that France will restore the independence of their country. Many died of yellow fever as well. Others defected to join the rank of the indigenous army on the side of freedom, thinking that they were fighting for the wrong cause.

Dessalines and Petion left the rank of the French Army and returned to fight with the indigenous army in October 1802. In November 1802, Leclerc died of Yellow Fever. The Vicomte of Rochambeau ordered to kill all blacks. He imported 15,000 attack dogs from Jamaica and started drowning black as recommended by Leclerc before his death, while Bonaparte sent a re-enforcement of 20,000 men. Dessalines matched Rochambeau in cruelty killing as many whites as Rochambeau killed blacks.
Dessalines chose to stick the heads of his victims on spikes. Some royalist farmers rallied to the cause of the indigenous and the rebels managed to decisively defeat the French troops at the battle of Vertieres on the 18 November 1803. A new nation of Haiti was born where slaves, mulattoes, rich or poor colons, polish soldiers who deserted the rank of the French troops, have all contributed to the Haitian victory. Napoleon lost a great deal of army and fortune but after selling the Louisiana territories in April 1803, he accepted defeat. Dessalines won many more battles against Leclerc and Rochambeau becoming the most successful military commander in the struggle against Napoleonic France. Unfortunately, Toussaint has never been able to enjoy the final victory for which so many lives were lost. 

Napoleon was fighting on too many fronts. A naval war with the British Empire in May 1803, forced the Royal navy to dispatch a squadron from Jamaica to cruise the Caribbean waters in order to eliminate any communication between the French outpost and to capture or destroy any French warship around the colony. That blockade of Saint Domingue stopped the French from supplying reinforcements to their army and benefited the indigenous armies. Rochambeau troops were trapped and fell into pieces; the men were sick and many died of Yellow Fever, leaving Rochambeau himself enjoying a colossal fortune while taking time to perform banquets and military balls in Saint Domingue.

This is with pleasure that I chose to enumerate the facts of war of our ancestors and I take this opportunity to dedicate this article to all the Haitiano American kids who are growing up in the United States, not knowing much about the epic fights leading to the Independence of Haiti. Our ancestors are our heroes for being able to lead such a long battle to the only successful anti-slavery and anticolonial insurrection against Napoleon and the French army. I wanted to tell them in my words our story with pride. These heroes pay dearly with their lives to fray us a way for generations to live free. We need to honor their sacrifice in assuring that their dreams will not die in vain. May Haiti survive, long after we are called to join our Creator.

Maxime Coles MD
February 2020

References:
5- Cesaire Aime, Toussaint Louverture: (Paris; Presence Africaine, 1981).
8- James C L R; Toussaint Louverture: The story of the only successful slave revolt in history, A Play in Three Acts. 1934.
Thank you to Stéphanie Hall for informing us of the Saint Michel Catholic School in Haiti for boys and girls, sponsored by Haiti Outreach Program. We hope you will also let us know how to order bracelets or necklaces.

Maxime Coles MD
On n’a pas de mots exacts pour décrire le torrent d’indignation qui a inondé le grand continent Américain au cours du mois écoulé, à la faveur du meurtre de George Floyd, mort d’asphyxie sous le genou qu’un officier blanc planta à son cou pendant plus de sept minutes, malgré ses cris de douleur le suppliant de lui sauver la vie.

Pourtant on n’en avait même pas fini de pleurer sa mort cruelle et d’en commencer le deuil qu’une autre bavure policière est venue jeter dans la consternation la communauté noire des États-Unis d’Amérique, plus particulièrement celle de la Géorgie. Et le monde de se mettre en cœur, d’un bout à l’autre de la terre, pour réclamer justice et de dire « assez, c’en est trop »

En effet, après qu’un jeune noir de la vingtaine fut retrouvé endormi dans son véhicule, la police avait été appelée pour porter l’homme à déblayer le parcours. Le conducteur fut retrouvé dans un état d’ébriété et la police tenta de l’arrêter. C’est à ce moment-là, qu’une échauffourée eut lieu entre le noir et les deux policiers venus pour l’arrêter. Comme l’homme noir tenta de s’enfuir, il fut abattu froidement de deux balles dans le dos par l’un des policiers appelés sur les lieux. Le lendemain, le bas de la ville d’Atlanta fut mis à sac et le Wendys où la voiture avait été garée, fut lui aussi, incendié sans appel. Les protestations de la veille, en rapport avec le meurtre de George Floyd, qui commencent à diminuer en intensité, ont aussitôt repris de plus belle. Et La question sur toutes les lèvres était : d’où vient cette manière de patrouiller les rues et les communautés qui veut que le policier se serve de son arme à tout bout de champs, plutôt que de son ingéniosité, pour abattre impunément comme si les noirs étaient des bêtes sauvages à traquer ?. Dans une société comme l’Amérique qui se dit civilisée et se veut égalitaire, n’est-ce pas que de telles pratiques auraient du être obsolètes et d’un passé révolu ?

D’abord, Mr. Rashid qui a tente de s’enfuir n’était pas armé. Et quand un homme tente de s’enfuir, c’est qu’il ne cherche pas la confrontation. Dans quelle que soit la législation policière, il est défendu de tirer quelqu’un dans le dos, sauf en cas de guerre peut-être, et surtout si l’on sait qu’il n’est pas armé. En faisant sortir l’homme de la voiture pour lui administrer le test de sobriété, on savait très bien qu’il n’était pas armé. Donc il n’était pas dangereux et sa mort était une mort gratuite.

Il ne se passe pas une semaine dans ce pays sans que la police n’exerce brutalement sa force dans les rapports qu’il entretient avec les minorités ethniques de ce pays, particulièrement avec les noirs.

Qui n’a pas observé, plusieurs fois de suite, tué par un policier venu chercher chez lui, à la requête de ses parents pour le transporter à l’hôpital, un malade mental périr sous les balles assassines de ce même policier à cause du simple fait qu’il était incapable de suivre les instructions ou qu’il était en train de réagir dans l’incohérence ou brutalement par suite de son état mental ?.

Il y a quelque temps de cela, un autre noir, très connu d’un quartier résidentiel, roulait sa chaise mécanique au beau milieu de la circulation quand la police fut appelée pour l’enlever de la rue. Le niveau avancé de son incapacité mentale l’empêchait de comprendre que le policier lui demandait de se lever de la chaise mécanique et d’avancer vers lui.

D’ailleurs, il était constamment en chaise roulante,
étant à mobilité réduite. Malheureusement, après plusieurs appels répétés ou des instructions non suivies que lui intimait le policier, il fut lâchement criblé de balles par le policier depuis sa chaise mécanique.

Le dernier cas à faire surface est celui d’un jeune noir en Colorado qui fut malmené par la police à sa sortie d’un mini-store ou boutique rien que pour avoir porté un masque pour se couvrir le nez. Il avait une certaine condition physique qui s’aggravait à chaque fois qu’il vint en contact avec le froid. Et comme le manager du store ne pouvait pas voir le visage entier du jeune homme, il s’imagina que celui-ci devait être un criminel et il appela la police qui, arrivant sur les lieux, le lança par terre et s’assit sur son thorax jusqu’à ce qu’il ne put plus respirer. Il fut transporté à l’hôpital où il mourut trois jours plus tard.

Les cas sont nombreux où les policiers sont appelés sur les lieux pour gérer un incident mineur et en sortent les mains souillées du sang d’une innocente victime. Je n’ai jamais vu une catégorie de gens avec la gâchette aussi facile que le policier blanc Américain. Quand il patrouille les rues de sa juridiction, il n’hésite à aucun moment à faire usage de son arme même sur ceux –là qu’il est appelé à servir et à protéger, particulièrement les sans-défenses, les malades mentaux et les handicapés etc.

C’est chaque jour que le policier tue sans raison et avec impunité des citoyens paisibles dans les rues de l’Amérique. Jusqu’ici, il n’y avait jamais eu de rétribution à son comportement pour le moins cavalier. Aucun jury n’avait réussi ni a les inculper ni a les retrouver coupables de quoi que ce soit. Le système en général tend à justifier le comportement du policier et à toujours lui donner raison même quand ce dernier semblait tuer sous la simple pulsion de son émotion, donc sans raison apparente.

Les noirs continuent d’être les victimes d’une mentalité raciste qui a malheureusement survécu à l’abolition du système esclavagiste, et qui porte le blanc à vouloir lynchler le noir partout où il le trouve. Ce système n’a jamais pu se défaire de cette tare coloniale qui a toujours vu en l’homme noir un être inférieur dont la vie ne vaut pas autant que celle de l’homme blanc.

La semaine dernière, Un policier blanc, aujourd’hui à la retraite, a résumé avec exactitude la mentalité du policier blanc par rapport au noir de ce pays quand il disait qu’il est temps d’arrêter « the opening season » vis-à-vis du noir. L’ « opening season », dans les campagnes de l’Amérique, étant cette époque de l’année où commence la chasse de certaines espèces d’animaux . Elle se situerait entre novembre ou fin d’octobre pour s’étendre jusqu’au mois de février. Pendant cette période –là, les détenteurs d’une License de chasse sont autorisés à chasser et à tuer au tant qu’ils veulent, sauf les tous jeunes animaux qui devront servir à la reproduction de l’espèce. En temps de pêche, c’est pareil, ils ont un temps déterminé pour pêcher et ils doivent cependant retourner à la rivière ou au lac toute espèce jugée trop jeune qui n’a pas encore acquis une certaine maturité.

Pour le policier blanc, toute l’année c’est de l’opening season. Ils ne font pas de discrimination. Ils tuent hommes, femmes et enfants, jeunes et vieux, malades mentaux etc. partout où ils les trouvent ; ils dégagent leur revoler à tout moment, impassibles qu’ils sont de récriminations en dépit de leur comportement délictueux.

Le comportement du policier a sa racine dans un système bien plus pourri et injuste qu’on ne le croyait. Nous vivons ici dans un système de répression absolue, et ce sont toujours les noirs qui payent le pot cassé. Malgré les libertés apparentes dont nous semblons jouir, il suffit d’un simple écart pour comprendre combien le système est vénal donc accessible uniquement à ceux qui peuvent se l’acheter et se le payer. Il ya dans le système judiciaire, un procureur général ou un substitut procureur communément appelé un général attorney ou assistant attorney qui abrite le 2e étage et qui rencontre le policier presque chaque jour dans les couloirs de son édifice quand les deux ne partagent pas tout carrément pas le même détachement. Il va toujours faire cause commune avec le policier et ne va jamais l’inculper pour quelque raison que ce soit. Le policier se sent toujours au dessus de toutes lois et n’en fait qu’à sa guise. Voila pourquoi il faut un bureau spécial pour juger ou décider du sort d’un policier accusé d’abus d’autorité, car nul ne peut être juge et partie à la fois.

La première décision qu’il faudra prendre pour porter les policiers à respecter les citoyens qu’ils desservent, c’est de les forcer à résider dans la communauté même où ils sont affectés. Trop de policiers vivent a plus de trente miles de la communauté qu’ils desservent et ne comprennent rien de ce qui s’y passe. Quand ils vivent dans la même communauté qu’ils desservent, ils comprennent mieux les gens qui y vivent .Il y a leurs enfants qui vont à l’école avec les autres enfants du bloc, et ils ont une moindre tendance à exercer leur pouvoir arbitraire sur leurs concitadins.

La deuxième décision c’est l’éducation psychologique du policier. Ce dernier a toujours eu peur du noir par sentiment de culpabilité ou par ignorance. Avant de le laisser porter une arme meurtrière, il aurait du apprendre à arpenter toute la communauté de long en
large pendant un temps déterminé qui lui donnerait assez de bagage pour comprendre que le noir n’est pas un sauvage mais qu’il peut cependant lui aussi monter le ton et chercher à se défendre s’il se sent humilié. Enfin, il faut aussi un cycle d’étude plus étendu pour le policier avant qu’il ne commence à exercer sa profession. Dans la plus part des pays européens, il faut entre trois à cinq ans à un aspirant policier pour devenir un policier accompli. Or, chez nous, cela n’est pas le cas. Il est dans les rues après un cycle de 12 à 16 mois, ce qui est tout a fait insuffisant pour quelque qui va avoir droit de vie et de mort sur les individus de la ville qu’il patrouille.

Il faut dire aussi que le policier est trop concentré sur la répression des écarts de la société au lieu d’être un simple auxiliaire de la justice. Ils devraient être des agents de paix au lieu d’être des juges eux-mêmes dans un système qui est déjà biaisé au départ et qui utilise des poids et mesures différents quand il ‘s’agit de délibérer sur un noir.

En fait, ce n’est pas le système policier seul qu’il faut reformer dans ce pays. Mais bien tout le système judiciaire qu’il faut remettre en question. Car le juge blanc lui-même est aussi bourré de préjugés que le policier et l’attorney qui instruisent l’affaire. Parce que le système est couteux, il porte nombre de noirs à accepter des plea deal pour des crimes qu’ils n’ont pas commis, tellement ils savent qu’ils n’auront aucune grâce aux yeux du juge qui les envoie toujours finir leur vie en prison, et prononce tous les jours des sentences bien plus lourdes à l’égard du noir que du blanc trouvé coupable de la même infraction.

Il faut aussi un système intermédiaire entre le policier, premier élément de la chaîne pénale, et la prison son point final où son ‘aboutissant, et là la réhabilitation, en passant par l’encouragement au travail bien rémunéré et la sauvegarde des liens familiaux, est assurée.

Malheureusement le système pénitencier est aussi vermoulu et disloqué que les policiers qui agissent en toute impunité. Le juge encourage l’incarcération des hommes noirs de tout âge à un rythme bien plus élevé que l’homme blanc car c’est du maintien en prison de l’homme noir que dépend la survie du système carcéral.

L’équation est simple : il y a un besoin de jeter des gens en prison et les policiers sont là pour les arrêter. Mais il y a aussi des juges corrompus pour jeter injustement des hommes noirs derrière les barreaux avec des peines énormes. Car plus longtemps ils sont derrière les barreaux plus va pouvoir survivre le système carcéral ou pénitentiaire, plus sont garanties la prospérité et la viabilité du système. Il ya des policiers qui vont chercher à remplir leur quota mensuel d’arrestation en interpellant dans les rues des jeunes de 15 à 22 ans sortis particulièrement des groupes ethniques minoritaires. Faute de quoi, ils seront assujettis à des blâmes pour n’avoir pas bien rempli leur tâche. Un groupe de policiers en majorité des noirs et des hispaniques affirment sans ambages qu’ils sont forcés d’arrêter un certain nombre de gens tous les mois et qu’ils sont souvent en contravention avec l’institution s’ils n’arrivent pas à remplir leur quota d’arrestations mensuel.

L’état paie en moyenne $ 35000 annuellement au système carcéral pour chaque prisonnier qu’il héberge,(soit $36.299.25ct en 2017 et $34.704.82ct en 2016) Pourtant les prestations sociales accordées à un individu frappé d’un quelconque handicap mental ou physique dépasse à peine les milliers de dollars mensuellement. Donc l’emprisonnement est une industrie florissante où s’investissent pas mal de gens dans ce pays dont même des noirs riches et sans conscience de classe.

La lutte contre l’injustice des noirs ne fait que commencer. Il faut non seulement superviser les policiers mais aussi les juges qui entretiennent une injustice criante vis-à-vis des noirs en leur accordant des peines bien plus lourdes que celles écopées par les blancs. Il devrait y avoir une commission de révision des sentences qui intervienait pour corriger les écarts flagrants entre la sentence prononcée contre un noir et celle prononcée contre un blanc.

Il est bon de voir que la société trop longtemps endormie et indifférente du drame dont les noirs sont victimes de toujours dans le pays, commencent à se réveiller et à demander que les choses soient faites autrement. Mais il ne faut pas s’arrêter en chemin car on a déjà été là dans le temps pour se rendre compte à chaque fois que rien n’a vraiment changé. Il faut enlever à la police son droit de vie et de mort sur les paisibles citoyens qui ne demandent qu’à vivre en paix sur le seul coin de terre qu’ils aient jamais connu depuis leur voyage forcé de l’Afrique vers le nouveau monde. Je n’ai pas compris le silence complice de ces institutions religieuses qui prêchent la justice, le pardon la charité et qui tournent leur regard ailleurs face au drame des noirs de ce pays. Tandis qu’il en est encore temps, qu’elles joignent la lutte et apportent leur pierre à l’édification de la nouvelle société que nous réclamons tous de toute notre âme.

Rony Jean-Mary, M.D.
Coral Springs, FL
le 29 juin 2020.
HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

REYNALD ALTEMA, MD

For those of us who grew up outside the continental USA and migrated here, the process of acculturation is a path that meanders more than follows a linear or even a logical pattern. It runs the spectrum from complete rejection of one’s cultural heritage to outright refusal to participate into the national quilt made of several ethnic groups to form a harmonious whole, at least in principle. For the average person, however, some aspects of American life are very easy to catch unto. For example, Thanksgiving is espoused as a family celebration by immigrants and natives alike. One can arguably state a celebration centering on culinary feasting can be nothing but a no-brainer. Nonetheless, even for those who don’t exactly care about eating turkey still find appealing the idea of sharing a meal among friends, family members. It stands to reason that the notional construct of family is so venerated that it’s a universal human response.

Other aspects of American cultural life vary in their appeal. Halloween follows closely to Thanksgiving in popularity. Kids attending school get pulled into the hoopla of festooning a costume primarily and then go trick or treat. Parents find it hard to not give in to children’s insistence of partaking in this celebration. Same can be said about the biggest holiday of the year, Christmas. This time of the year, another one is around the corner, July 4th. Macy’s fireworks’ display in the skyline of NY is a national event. Barbecues with friends and or family during the day has become a given.

On the other hand, some common practice among the natives don’t seem to attract the foreign-born so much. For college students born in America, becoming a member of a Greek fraternity, especially when one lives on campus has a long, storied as well as checkered past. However, it’s not common for students who grew outside the US to become fraternity/sorority members. Such purely Yankee tradition, in the purest sense of the term without any pejorative connotation, has unfortunately evolved along racial lines. Since they are private clubs, they have their own membership criteria. Black students who were not welcome in the white students’ fraternities formed their own. This type of bonding tends to last over a lifetime. The idea of membership in a Greek fraternity is not easily grasped by an immigrant because it’s such a peculiar North American custom. Certainly, there are countless examples one can find that follow this same trend. There are several historical events that illustrate this truism. This month of June has two bookends, sort of. It begins with the event in the Greenwood neighborhood of Oklahoma City and toward the end month, there is the Juneteenth. They are both important but for
opposite reasons. The latter is a celebration while the former is a date of mourning. Each event warrants a special analysis but for today we will concentrate on the latter.

The choice is based on numerous reasons, not the least of which is the fact that even among American-born individuals, the events that occurred almost a century ago are not well known. In addition, the celebration in its very nature evokes a kinship to the similarity of the subject, the common genesis of the struggle and the symbolism associated with it. Like most seminal historical events, delving into the matter opens some sore wounds and unpleasant warts of the veneer of society. Juneteenth goes back to 1865 or more precisely June 19th, some two and half years after the Proclamation of Emancipation of slaves. That event took place on September 22, 1862, during the Civil War. In that proclamation by President Lincoln, enslaved people in the Confederate States but not the Union States would be considered free once they crossed into a state of the Union and would be free to enroll in the Union Army. That Proclamation would be later associated with the end of slavery in the US inaccurately. It was meant as a means of punishment to the Confederacy because slaves were a valued commodity for the wealth they were generating. Slaves in the Union were not liberated by this decree, they would become free as per the 13th Amendment that became law of the land in December 1865, more than three years later. The similarity between our struggle and that of the slaves in America is the constant battle, the spilled blood of ours that had to be bartered in exchange for this most precious right: freedom.

The Civil War in essence was an effort by the Union to prevent dissolution of the country as its main reason. The Confederacy fought because it wanted to preserve the institution of slavery as it was an engine of economic growth to everybody but the slaves. Contrary to some revisionist interpretation of the conflict, Lincoln didn’t fight against the Confederacy out of magnanimity and compassion for the slaves. Absolutely not. In his own words as cited by Nikole Hannah-Jones in an exegesis in The NY Times magazine last year as part of The 1619 PROJECT, “You and we are different races….Your race suffer very greatly, many of them, by living among us, while ours suffer from your presence. In a word, we suffer on each side……. It’s better for us to be separate.”

To understand the mechanics of the events, think of present-day Black Lives Matter. Born out of repeated acts of wanton violence against innocent Black men in routine encounters with the police, it was considered as fringe movement made of radical elements and mainstream America didn’t pay attention to it. However, as evidence keeps accumulating of the viciousness of police brutality, young people have been coalescing in significant numbers to make the hidebound mindset untenable. The same phenomenon took place but over a much longer period starting in colonial times and spilling over well into the middle of the 19th century and gathering more steam as other nations were ceasing this inhuman practice called slavery. The abolitionist movement on one hand and intermittent revolts by slaves were having an effect. People that had previously taken a rigid position defending the status quo have changed their minds. No better act can second that premise than the decision by Princeton University barely a few days ago to dissociate itself from its former president who later on became no less than the president of the USA: Woodrow Wilson. He had prevented Black students from attending the school during his tenure and instituted very strict segregation in the federal government during his presidency. This type of resume that could have been ignored up till 4 months ago is now considered toxic. This is realpolitik.

A practical result of the Proclamation was the wholesale defection of slaves to join the ranks of the Union military. The victory came thanks to the help of the slaves.
Lincoln didn’t envision to have a democracy that included ex-slaves. In this respect he was no different than any number of liberators in South America who gained independence but didn’t exactly care for the lot of the slaves. With the constant infusion of slave soldiers, the tide turned but the Civil War would continue till Robert E. Lee’s surrender at Appomattox, Virginia to Ulysses S. Grant on April 9, 1865. Although Texas as part of the Confederacy had lost, it didn’t abolish slavery. One would have to wait till June when a Union general, Gordon Granger, at the head of his troops, reached Galveston, Texas, to make the announcement. The celebration of Juneteenth began in earnest the following year in 1866 and has grown in popularity gradually and now due to a confluence of unfortunate events that have galvanized society, its symbolism has reached a critical mass of approval to the point that it is being elevated to the status of a paid holiday by different states, including NY.

We, descendants of the first nation in the New World to have broken free from slavery, are very concerned about these historical facts because our fate and that of our African descendant cousins living in America are entwined. If Lincoln had his way, all Blacks would have left America to establish roots elsewhere. An effort in that direction took place when some were sent to Haiti and later on there was even an idea by the US to occupy the Dominican Republic to further that policy, a matter that strained the relationship between Frederic Douglass and Charles Sumner. Certainly, Liberia became a nation based on the idea of freed slaves relocating elsewhere after having donated their labor for centuries and not receiving any bounty in return. Juneteenth as a celebration of freedom mirrors our own and we should identify with it. In more ways than one, the freedom acquired by the slaves was not given to them, but they fought for it. Lincoln’s army would have been defeated had he not chosen to allow slaves to become soldiers in his army and they fought valiantly because it was an existential matter. He had to make that choice because not enough white men were volunteering to join or die for the cause of Negroes as many saw it. Lincoln’s duplicitous role vis-à-vis the freedom of slaves is well documented. Juneteenth is a reminder that with the abolition of slavery, Reconstruction was a feather in our cap as the South was transformed for the better with the passage of laws that made it mandatory for free public education, the 14th Amendment ensuring our children born of Black immigrants in this land are considered citizens with full rights, and even the 15th Amendment guaranteeing the right to vote. This ephemeral period ought to shine bright and make us wonder about our failure to do the same back home. Why didn’t we make public education compulsory when we broke free from bondage? The more we look at the accomplishments of the former slaves during Reconstruction, the more we need to do introspective search, auto critique of our own failings back home when we set out to build a state of free slaves. Juneteenth was the beacon of what was possible and what would later be accomplished for however short a period to be followed by years of darkness to eviscerate us by any means necessary. We just happen to have that uncanny ability to survive.
A mon Papa

Comment pourrais-je encore, te faire revivre
Ce rôle primordial que tu as joué
Dans notre vie de chaque jour,
Ce chemin que tu nous a trace
Sur cette chaussee cahoteuse de l’existence,
Cet ideal que tu as su nous imposer.

Je sais que tu aurais voulu feter, sur une des plages
Que nous avions si souvent visite,
Dans les saccades de tes brasses,
Au rythme des vagues houleuses et menacantes,
Comme pour affronter cet horizon lointain,
Tel un defi quotidien a surmonter.

Mon coeur est meurtri de ne plus t’avoir a mes cotes
Meurtri de ne plus pouvoir compter sur ta presence,
Meurtri d’etre incapable de te serrer dans mes bras:
C’est le temps des “Papas”,
C’est le temps de partager cette tendresse
Dont tu as su nous couvrir, aux moments propices.

“Bonne Fete des Peres”, Papa,
Le vide que tu as cree, en partant, est abyssal.
Pilier de mon existence,
tu as joui d’un charme irresistible,
En imposant ta ferme poigne et ton savoir-faire
pour m’aider a ouvrir les portes.

Tout resonne encore en moi,
Car tu sembles etre cet ange gardien
Qui continue a me proteger.
“Bonne fete des Peres”, Papa.
L’amour que j’eprouve, est sans mesure.
Hommage a toi, magnifique et gracieux.

Maxime Coles MD
We are gathered today in honor and in memory of Reginald Oswald Crosley, my father, our brother in the Lord, and in celebration of the glory that he now enjoys in the very Presence of God.

Reginald, my father was born to Leonard and Susan Crosley in Port-au-Prince, Haiti on Saturday, July 10, 1937. He was their only child. Sorrow came early in my Dad’s life. His mother died when he was ten years old, and his father, a Jamaican businessman who worked in utilities, died when he was fifteen, leaving him to be raised by his uncle, Marcel Bichotte.

Uncle Marcel was fairly well-known due to his membership in the famous Haitian band, Jazz Des Jeunes, but at home, he was pretty strict. The family attended the First Baptist Church of Port-au-Prince, where Reginald became known as a predicateur, or lay preacher. When Reginald contracted tuberculosis in his teen years and spent an extended period more or less alone in a sanitarium, he spent much time with God, and the faith that would shape all his years became ever more solid.
In high school and college, Reginald began to be rather well-known as a poet. He was active in the literary society, *Haiti Littéraire*. Beyond poetry, he was fascinated by French literature, philosophy and religion. Over the years, he would author seven books having to do mostly with the intersections between philosophy, religion and medicine, and he would most likely have become a professor in those areas had Uncle Marcel not pressured him to become a physician so that he’d make a better living.

Getting into medical school was as competitive then as it is today, and only the top forty applicants were admitted every year. Papa Doc Duvalier, Haiti’s tyrannical President, tried to get his own cronies into medical school regardless of their scores, and Reginald was among those who protested that effort. As a result of that protest, it became necessary for Regi to lie low and to go into hiding for a time.

When that danger faded away, Reginald continued his studies at the medical school. Medical students at the State University were expected to work and do their externship at the Port-au-Prince General Hospital. Med students had to themselves draw their patients’ blood and deliver these samples themselves to the lab. It was while fulfilling his medical student’s duty that Reginald became aware of a cute lab technician by the name of Bernadette Carré.

A medical student named Adrienne, a good friend of Reginald, happened to be Bernadette’s friend as well. Of course, Adrienne was approached for help, the answer to Reginald was clear “If your intentions are honorable, I’ll put a word and will give you a proper introduction.” They were, and she did.

Two of Bernadette’s multiple brothers were physicians, so Reginald didn’t have to look deep to find reasons to visit Bernadette’s home. Ostensibly to consult those colleagues at home, but he cherished also the byproduct of these home consultations: the opportunity to see Bernadette. I’ve already noted that Reginald was known to be an accomplished poet, and he wooed Bernadette with love letters written in beautiful French and with poetry inspired by her beauty.

These efforts were successful, and Reginald and Bernadette were wed in an unusual church service on Saturday, October 22, 1966. The singular aspect was this was the very first “interfaith” wedding ceremony in Haiti. It was officiated by her priest and his pastor, That knot was apparently a good one, since they celebrated their 53rd anniversary last October, a mere two months before Bernadette’s death.!

Not too long after their marriage, Reginald completed medical school and both moved to Brooklyn, New York for his residency. Two weeks after their arrival in the States, Reginald and Bernadette welcomed into the family their first child and my older sister Beatrice.

Expectedly, Reginald and Bernadette spoke little English when they hit New York shores, but fortunately, Bernadette’s oldest sister, Carmelle, had preceded them in Brooklyn. She and her whole family: husband and five children were very kind to accommodate Bernadette and her own family for the duration of Reginald’s residency training. Carmelle’s husband was very kind to teach Reginald the in’s and outs of New York City life, and their families treasured the memories of those years passed together.
During the Brooklyn years, Bernadette and Reginald also welcomed me their only son, into their family. This is when Reginald was an outspoken critic of President Duvalier in the Haiti-Observateur, a Haitian newspaper edited in New York. These writings were read in Haiti. So when Reginald who had always intended to return to Haiti at the end of his training in the States, was ready to sail back home, his record as a Duvalier critic made that move inadvisable. So the family moved to Columbia, where there were already a few Haitian physicians.

Reginald and Bernadette joined the Columbia Baptist congregation in 1973, shortly after their arrival there, and not too long after this congregation establishment. They were active and committed members ever since. Reginald took again the “Prédicateur” mantle again and became a Bible Study teacher, a role he would keep for decades, while Bernadette became active there in the L.O.V.E. group “Ladies Organized for Volunteering and Encouragement”.

As the years went by, Reginald welcomed a number of additions to their family: wife, Tonya, and children, Pascal, Nova; and husband, Zack, Zion, and daughter, Nyaira. Besides of medicine, read widely in and was always books, he even was member of the physician’s The “Association Médicale Haitienne a L’Etranger”.

With age, frailty became a permanent fixture for both Reginald and Bernadette as for most humans. In the last year or two, when neither of them could drive any longer, even when neither of them could no longer walk very well, even when the weather was awful, Bernadette and Reginald—or whichever wasn’t sick—would call a cab and come to church! They frequently were used as exemplars before the rest of the congregation, and one could hear the Pastor summoning others: “If Reginald and Bernadette can get here, YOU certainly can get here! too”

Sorrow drew near last December, as Reginald’s beloved Bernadette crossed over into the Heavenly City ahead of him. And now, just a few months later, I suspect that my Dad smiled last Tuesday evening, the 23rd of June when heaven’s chariot drew near once again. Reginald and Bernadette are now reunited in the City of Light and we thank God, both for their lives and as their Savior. Thank you everybody.
Chers Amis de AMHE,

C’est avec beaucoup de peine que nous avons appris le décès du Dr. Fritz Gardiner, ancien président de l’AMHE Chapitre de Montréal.

Il est décédé hier soir, le 16 juin 2020, suite à une longue maladie courageusement supportée. Dr. Gardiner a été un membre de la première heure de notre association.

Le Board de l’AMHE, au nom de tous les membres présente ses condoléances émues à sa famille, à ses deux enfants : Lyne et Ralph Gardiner, à ses collègues de la promotion 1964 et aux membres du Chapitre de Montréal.

Que son âme repose en paix.

J.-M. Frantz Hyacinthe, M.D.
Vice-Chairman of the AMHE Board of Trustees

Deces de Frantz Haspil, brother of Alix Haspil MD

Adieu au Colonel Frantz Haspil

Frantz (Franco) Haspil n’est plus. Il nous a laissé pour aller rejoindre son Créateur. Je l’ai connu alors que nous étions boy-scouts dans la troupe St Georges, au Petit Séminaire College St Martial. Il était un chef de patrouille dans “Les Malfinis”. Je l’avais perdu de vue et je NE sais pas pourquoi Le destin avait divergé nos chemins. Et pourtant, j’ai vecu tres longtemps pres de lui alors que je me trouvais au Connecticut et que lui, enseignait a Westpoint. Je sais maintenant qu’il a beneficie d’une carriere militaire exemplaire et qu’il avait finalement pris une retraite bien meritee au grade de Colonel dans l’Armee Americaine. Il a depuis continue inlassablement a enseigner a West Point et a differentes ecoles de son voisinage en Floride.

Franco laisse une famille eprouvee par les circonstances. Plongee dans Le deuil. A as femme Liliane Haspil, nee Denis, a ses enfants Michael, Thierry et Dominique, a ses petit-enfants Jordan et Jasmine, je voudrais personellement presenter mes condoléances les plus emues. Au nom de la AMHE et aussi en Mon nom personnel, je veux tres specialement reconforter Notre confrere Alix Haspil MD, frere aine de Frantz, as femme Martine, ses enfants et neveux affectes par ce deuil. Frantz Haspil laissera un vide qu’il sera difficile de combler autour de lui, tant a la maison qu’a Wespoint. As mission sur Terre EST terminee.

Bon voyage compagnon de troupe, eminent Professeur, mari devoue, militaire aguerri et pere modele. Tu vivras toujours parmi nous autant que nous seront a meme de ramaner les bons souvenirs d’une vie bien vecue. Que Le Seigneur te receive a bras ouverts dans son royaume, Mon ami et que la Terre te soit legere.

Maxime Coles MD
Décès du Dr. Adeline Jocelyn Verly

« L’Ambassade d’Haïti au Canada a le regret d’annoncer le décès de la docteure Adeline Jocelyn Verly (94 ans), le 14 juin dernier à Ottawa.

Mme Jocelyn Verly était arrivée au Canada en 2004 après le décès de son mari, le Dr Jean Verly, au terme d’une carrière de près de 50 ans en obstétrique et gynécologie.

En 1955, elle crée la Fondation pour la Santé reproductrice et l’Éducation familiale, plus connue sous le sigle FOSREF, qui a pour but de promouvoir la santé en matière de reproduction et d’éducation familiale.

En juin 1983, on la retrouve au poste de Directeur de l’Unité de coordination des Directions régionales. Après un bref passage au poste de Secrétaire d’État de la Santé publique, elle est attachée à titre de consultante à la Direction exécutive de l’Unité d’exécution et de coordination du Ministère. Elle y restera jusqu’à son départ à la retraite en avril 1986.

Madame Adeline Jocelyn Verly a été inhumée le 17 juin 2020 à Ottawa. Seulement dix membres de la famille étaient autorisés à la voir une dernière fois et à dire une courte prière pour le repos de son âme au salon funéraire Héritage d’Orléans.

Frantz Liauuda, Ambassadeur de la République d'Haïti au Canada, et les membres de la mission diplomatique présentent leurs sincères condoléances aux membres de la famille et proches de la défunte. »

HL/ HaïtiLibre

Condolences and Funeral Arrangement for Jean Dely Mocombe

Dear AMHE Members Family and Friends,

AMHE has learned of the passing of Jean Dely Mocombe, beloved brother of Dr. Lucien Denis Mocombe. On behalf of the AMHE leadership and the membership, we send our sincere condolences to Dr. Mocombe and his family.

Dr. J. Pierre Paul Cadet, MD
President, AMHE

Evelyne Fanfan a été rejointre son Createur, victime du COVID-19 en Haïti. Je veux exprimer tant au nom de la AMHE qu’en mon nom personnel, nos sincères condoléances a la Famille Fanfan et aux amis affliges par ce deuil. Aux docteurs Joseph (Jocky), Paul Marie et Michele, aux autres frères et soeurs Jean Robert, Monique, Leslie, Elsie, a leur époux et épouse ainsi qu’aux quatorze petits neveux et nièces, nous partageons la douleur. Sa mission sur terre est terminée. Que ce Dieu de Miséricorde la recoive a bras ouverts dans son royaume. Repose en paix et que la terre te soit legere Evelyne!

. Maxime Coles MD.
Published on the AMHE Facebook page last two weeks
Articles parus sur la page Facebook de l'AMHE durant la dernière semaine


And more…

Upcoming Events

SPACE TO RENT