Saint Croix and the Virgin Islands
Maxime J Coles MD

The Caribbean Sea is populated with multiple islands. If it has been difficult to learn about other paradises closed to our beloved Haiti, an archipelago (group of islands) of the Virgin Islands or the Leeward islands in the Caribbean Sea, strikes us for its originality. Indeed, this is where Christopher Columbus landed on his second trip to America in November 1493 with 17 ships and 1500 men. He called the island Santa Cruz /“Santa Ursula y las Once Mil Virgenes” in honor of the legendary St Ursula and the 11,000 martyred virgins”. We would like to bring to life the history of the Arawak Indians in this part of our world with their different artifacts found on the workings of a sugar plantation. More we will try to bring the chronology of the African people’s history in the Virgin Islands who like anywhere else in Americas, were used as slaves to cultivate the lands while the native Indians were dying.

This Virgin Islands stand geographically at the Easternmost part of the Greater Antilles (Cuba, Haiti, Jamaica). some belong to the British while, another group is part of the territory of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. The Danish Virgin Islands (Saint Thomas, Saint John and Saint Croix) were part of Islands West Indies Danish territory until they were purchased by the United States of America. The first human habitation on these islands are believed to be with the arrival of the Arawakan speaking people...
who came from the Orinoco River Basin of South America as early as the 1000 BCE. They were farmers and fishermen who settled in villages and developed over the years the complex Taíno culture around 200 BCE. In the mid-15th century, the Carib settled also on the islands and conquered the Taíno but in 1555, the Spaniards defeated the Carib and claimed the island of Saint Croix for Spain. In 1625, English and French settlers invaded Saint Croix and built up farms until the return of the Spaniards which evicted them for a short period. The French took again all the islands the same year and annexed them to Santo Domingo.

Historically, Saint Thomas was the first island to be annexed by the Danish West India Guinea Company in 1672, then Saint John in 1718. The French West India Company took also the opportunity to purchase Saint Croix when the Danish went bankrupt in 1754. The King Christian VI of Denmark and Norway assumed direct control over all three islands. During the Napoleonic wars (1801-1802 and 1807-1815), Britain took over the control of the Danish territory. The Danish were trading manufactured goods to Africa in exchange for slaves able to work on their plantations in these Caribbean colonies. Grossly by 1778, it was estimated that the Danes were bringing around 3000 African slaves, yearly, to their West Indies territories until the end of 1802. Earlier in 1792, the Crown Prince Regent Frederik has banned the trade of slaves. They established a commerce in the exportation of Sugar, Molasses and Rum back to Denmark. These plantations lost all their productivity once turmoil on the islands become consequent to the slave’s insurrection in 1848 which forced the Danish authorities, soon to abolish slavery. The Danish Parliament debated on the sale of the islands with Germany and the United States of America, and finally, it was sold to the USA for 25 million dollars but the transfer was effective on 31 March 1917.

Merely an area of 82 square miles (210kms square) with 32 miles long and 7 miles wide with a highest point being the Mount Eagle (1165 feet or 355.1 meters), Saint Croix stand as a district of the Virgin Islands with a population of around 55.000 exhibiting a nice mixture of ethnicity between Afro-Caribbean, Hispanic mainly Puerto Rico and Santo Domingo and native Deutsch Caucasians or migrants from mainland USA. Ste Croix is the largest of the islands of the archipelago and the capital of these territories is Charlotte, located in St Thomas. Ste Croix has the nickname of “Twin city” because of its two towns Frederiksted on the western side and Christiansted on the Northeast side.

The island indigenous Taíno name of Saint Croix is “Ay Ay” but its modern name Sainte Croix, translated from the Spanish “Isla de la Cruz”, name we already said Christopher Columbus has given in discovering it. Once the island became a Danish territory, the name “Sankt Croix” (Saint Croix) returned but it is really in 1917 when the US took over the islands that it kept definitely the actual name of Saint Croix. Another island,” Water island” which is also part of the Virgin Islands was not sold to the USA in 1917 but was transferred to the Danish East Asiatic Company, a private shipping company. Later in 1944 it was transferred to the United States Virgin Islands in 1996. It is known as a volcanic island (491.5 acres or 1.989 Km square), south of Saint Thomas with less than 200 inhabitants.

Let us review a little the history of the island of Saint Croix.

As we stated above, it is believed that the island of Saint Croix was populated by the Taíno Indians from 700 to 1425 but it was still devoid of habitants by 1590. Historians argue that various indigenous groups lived there prior to the landing of Christopher Columbus in 1493. The Spaniards were attacked by the Carib Kalinago, a group who lived on the north shore of the island, near the Salt River. This was the first recorded fight by the Spaniards with the native population of the islands. A battle site “Cabo de la Flecha” (Cape of
the Arrow) was described in the history books. Although the Spaniards have never colonized the island of Saint Croix, most of the native population were killed or dispersed. This explains why, by the turn of the 16th century, this island was inhabited. It is really around 1625 that Dutch and English settlers arrived on the island of Saint Croix, joined by some refugees from St Kitts. The English, later, took complete possession of the island and expelled the Dutch and the French settlers. 25 years later, they were also evicted by the Spanish invaders in August 1650. The next year, the French re-conquered the island and established a colony of 300. The Island of Saint Croix was officially claimed as a French territory in the name of the king Louis XIV from 1651 to 1664, by the Knights of Malta (Hospitallers) which was sold later to the French West India Company. In 1695, the colony was transferred to Santo Domingo especially during the war of the Grand Alliance in which France battled the English and the Dutch. Saint Croix remained inhabited for the next 38 years.

In 1725, St Thomas Governor Frederik Moth suggested to the Danish West Indies Company directors to purchase the island of Saint Croix. It was purchased for 750,000 pounds from France by Denmark and Norway. Louis XV ratified the treaty and King Frederik V took control of Saint Croix in paying with French coins during a year and a half. The same governor Moth became also the governor of Saint Croix installing many Sugar and Cotton plantations with more than 1900 slaves on the island with 360 whites. By 1754, there were some 7600 slaves, forcing King Frederick IV to take full control of the territories. For the next 200 years, Saint Croix and Saint Thomas were known as the Danish West Indies and by the late 18th century, the slave population was around 20,000 while the colonists were 2000.

I will refer the lector to a past AMHE Newsletter issue (# 274 AMHE, March 2020) relating on the first slave uprising in the Americas: the 1733 slave insurrection on the island of St John, in the Virgin Islands where 150 African slaves mostly originated from Ghana (Akwamu) revolted against the owners and managers of the island’s plantations on November 23, 1733. This was considered as the earliest slave revolt in the “New World” which lasted until August 1734. The slaves captured the fort in Coral and took control of the entire island in the goal of controlling themselves the production of crop. The planters did not give up and continued to fight to re-gain control. The Akwamu slaves were defeated by hundreds of better armed French and Swiss soldiers who came to their rescue from the French colony of Martinique. They hunted down the maroons and put an end to the rebellion in August 1734. I will discuss further the most important revolt on the island in 1848 which bought freedom to all slaves in the Danish West Indies.

On the other side, the Spanish expanded their conquest to the Americas and occupied most of the West Indies. We have seen the way they enslaved the indigenous Arawak’s and used them as slave labor until Bartholomew took their cause in pity and suggested to Queen Isabelle De
Castille to use in replacement of the native Indians, African slaves. The Indians died as a result of atrocity by the Spaniards, infectious diseases, war and over working conditions as slaves. By the late 17th century, the British, French and the Danes were sharing together the islands. But in St John, the British won out before the Dane claimed St John in 1718 although numerous planters stayed behind as settlers, there was not enough laborers. Young Danish were not interested in emigrating to the West Indies to provide a reliable source of labor. They tried to interest prisoners to come to the plantation unsuccessfully. It became obvious like for the other imperial powers that the best way to populate the plantation with laborers, was to import African slaves. Danish ships transported 85,000 African slaves to the New World between 1660 and 1806.

This brings the story of Alexander Hamilton, one of our Founding Father in the United States who lived with his mother Rachel Faucette and his brother on the island of Saint Croix in 1765. He lost his father James Hamilton by abandonment and later his mother to death. His uncle become his guardian when he was 13 in age and Alexander worked for a merchant company Beekman and Cruger on King street until a business man volunteered to sponsor his education in New York. The British occupation of the Danish West Indies took place at the end of March 1801 for a short period and Denmark and Norway accepted the capitulation allowing the British troops to occupy the islands for a while and until they return it to Denmark and Norway in April 1802. The British repeated the invasion more than one time especially because of Napoleon’s alliance to Denmark and Norway during the Napoleonic wars. At the end of the war, the island was returned to Denmark.

Another well-known revolt in Saint Croix was the one in 1848 led by John “Buddhoe” Gottlieb a free black man. This was a well-planned rebellion that would change the course of history in the Danish Virgin Islands. On July 3, 1848, some 2000 thousands of slaves carefully executed a yearlong plan to demand their freedom on the streets of Frederiksted, outside Fort Frederik in Saint Croix, culminating to the Emancipation Proclamation. Bells and blowing conch shells were inviting more slaves to gather together although few rioting were noted. Women were seen dragging sugar cane tops near the fort in preparation to burn all the town if they did not receive satisfaction. Other leaders were Moses Roberts of the Estate Sprat Hall and Martin Admiral King from Estate Slob. The slaves began to think that John Gottlieb and Moses Roberts were the same person and created the name of “Moses Roberts”. Historians believe that Buddhoe was born as a freeman on the habitation of Estate LaGrange and become a skilled sugar boiler. He was 28 at the time of the emancipation and some state that he died in Grenada but others believe that he went to the United States. He was instrumental is the search for freedom and found his way to control the slaves avoiding a disaster on the islands.

Later, in the year of 1916, the islands of Saint Croix, St Thomas, and St John were sold to the United States for a sum of 25 million in gold allowing the US to take possession in April 1917. All the islanders become US citizen in 1927. Agriculture, Tourism have been since the mean of revenue while the Hovensa refinery re-opened recently its doors. We know also well the way the Hurricane “Hugo” imposed extensive damages, on the island, destroying 75% of the habitations after almost all the stores were looted by gangs. It was necessary to send the United States Army and the US Marshalls Service to restore order. Another hurricane “Maria” in 2017 hit Saint Croix western part with 250 miles per hour winds damaging buildings, schools and the only hospital on the island, the Governor Juan F Luis. Fortunately, the island has a desalination plant even if most home or business have built-in cisterns to collect rainwater.

The habitants of the island of Saint Croix are called “Crucians” or “Cruzan’s”. but the real one Cruzan is the one who can trace its origins prior to 1927, date when the United States took possession of all three islands. Ancestral native Crucians represent around one third of the population of Saint Croix mainly consisting in descendants of enslaved Africans dating from the colonies in the 18th and 19th centuries or descendants of paid laborers recruited by the Danes. The majority of the women were of mixed heritage and not too many European women were part of the population. Most Europeans males produced offspring with them. There are also a handful ancestral families on the island traditionally white called “bukra” and they
were of full European ancestry. Most ancestral native Crucians work for the Government of the Virgin Islands. Puerto Rican migration started in the 1950’s after the collapse of the sugar industry. And simultaneously while the United States were buying most of Puerto Rico islands of Vieques during World War II. They speak a special language called the “Spanglish” which represent a mixture of the Spanish and the Crucian creole English. They celebrate also a special tradition day similar to the one dedicated to Columbus where they parade proudly.

In the 1960’s, Saint Croix has seen a decline in the major industry and a replacement by tourism, the oil refinery and the alumina production. Then another migration from the lesser Antilles (down-island) occurred in the 1960’s. The demand for imported labor was excessive because many of the ancestral native Crucians who acquired American citizenship years earlier found a need to migrate to the mainland United States. looking for better career opportunities. Down-islanders from St Kitts, Antigua, St Lucia and Dominica made Saint Croix their permanent home. There is a melting pot on the island as well and in the years I provided my services to the Governor Juan F Luis Hospital, I met many people from Haiti, Santo Domingo and Jamaica.

Actually, the fact that the Virgin Islands became the property of the United States, has facilitated the migration. The middle class was mainly exclusive to the down-islanders with their Saint Croix born offspring. Others from European or African descent also migrated from St Marteen, Anguilla etc. Continental American became also part of the population and most will reside on the East end of the island and tend to work in the tourism industry, real estate and law offices. Some chose Saint Croix for retirement. Many ancestral native Crucians shared family ties with Barbados families (Bajans) especially because they were recruited to work on the sugar cane plantations in the past. Arab Palestinians have an influential part in the economy of the island since the 60’s. They handled the shopping industry like the food supermarkets, the gas stations. People from Philippines, China, Vietnam as well as people from South Americans are encountered and has been also the source of tension within the community with the Crucian and the other Caribbean countries.

Legislation was looked for by a select group of senators to define what a “Native US Virgin Islander” was, meaning anybody able to trace their heritage or ancestry prior to 1917, year of the purchase by the United States. Their efforts failed on the pressure of the public outcry and on the controversial facts presented. They realized that most native born US Virgin Islanders would not have qualified as “native” under the proposed legislation because their immigrant ancestors may have arrived after 1917…but thousands of Danish citizen would be qualified. The voted US Virgin Islands Constitution establishes three definitions of a US Virgin Islander which was rejected by the United States Congress on 2010 under the pretext that the law will violate the principle of equal rights for all citizen on the territory, native or not:

1- An “Ancestral Native Virgin Islander “with ancestral ties
2- A “Native Virgin Islander” born on the island
3- A “Virgin Islander” any US citizen who has resided on the island for more than 5 years.

This law was sent back for further consideration. The official number for the population of the island in around 55,000 according to the 2010 Census. Saint Croix is divided in 9 districts Christiansted, Ana’s Hope Village, East End, Frederiksted, Northcentral, Northwest, Sion Farm, Southcentral and Southwest.

English has been the dominant language in Saint Croix since the 1700. Danish may have been spoken as well as Scottish, Spanish, French as well as Dutch creole. Virgin Islander’s creole English is spoken by the majority of the population. Spanish is spoken by the migrants from especially Puerto Rico and Santo Domingo. French creoles are spoken by St Lucian and people from Dominica and Haiti. Arabic is the language of a large Palestinian community. Other immigrants from Anglophone Caribbean who migrated to Saint Croix speak English creole.

Saint Croix has been called the land of 150 churches but Christianity is the predominant
religion. Protestants are the most prevalent followed by the Catholics. A Spanish population with Danish from the colonial period, Anglican, Methodist, Moravian, Presbyterian, Adventists etc are prevalent on the island. Jehovah’s witness as well as Mormons can also be found. Islam is also practiced by the Arab population. There is also a small Jewish population and a small Philippine population who may have as well their own place to practice their faith. Finally, various form of Rastafari is practiced on the island.

Saint Croix economy like we mentioned above used to be mainly agricultural with sugar cane and cotton plantations but around the 1960’s, a rapid industrialization is seen with mainly one of the world larger refinery, HOVENSA operated by the Hess Oil Virgin Islands Corp (HOVIC) (HESS in the USA) and Petroleos of Venezuela SA (PDVSA). For a reason we may don’t understand, gas prices on the island are the highest in the USA. The HOVENSA closed its doors in 2012 with major repercussion on the economy of the island and anywhere else in the Virgin Islands. It is the largest employer using more than 1300 employers and almost 1000 of contractors. The refinery re-opened its doors at the satisfaction of the islanders.

There is also a Rum distillery, The Cruzan Rum Distillery which make the Cruzan Rum (Beam Suntory Inc.). This company was founded in 1760 as “Estate Diamond” which was using sugar cane to produce a dark style of rum. Nowadays, the company imports sugar cane molasses from other countries especially from the Dominican Republic. Cruzan Rum has won many Spirit Awards for it smoothness and its quality. The production of a supreme rum mainly aged for five (5) years in American oak barrels (Cruzan Estate Diamond Rum) and another one (Cruzan Barrel Estate Rum) or aged for twelve (12) years and more are to the satisfaction of the consumers. More, a new distillery “Diageo” has also been built next to the HOVENSA Refinery to produce another rum: “Captain Morgan Rum”. The competition is not well seen by some especially the Puerto Rican government who share the market.

There are many ways of transportation. In the automobile domain, cars drive on the left side of the road with left side steering columns. One has to learn and be precautious when driving is necessary while visiting the islands. Others are used to drive with right side steering column especially when traffic is differently oriented in the United States compared to the French or the Dutch West Indies or the United States or Puerto Rico or Santo Domingo. The islander benefits from a system of transportation called Virgin Island Transit (VITRAN) operated by the Virgin Island Department of Public Works. There is a system of shared taxis locally known as “Taxi buses” also share in the other islands consisting in full-sized vans between Frederiksted and Christiansted. They can be privately owned as well with no regular schedules. Customers will wait on the side of the road for the taxi and flag the diver. They are not metered and a $ 2.50 fee is charged regardless where the passenger gets on or off. Taxis can be used to specific locations especially by tourists but it will cost more.

There is also a Ferry service between the islands for $ 50 dollars in many locations like Galloway Bay, in Christiansted to Charlotte Amalie in St Thomas. It takes around two hours and half to destination. Other Ferry companies based in St Thomas and St John, may take the road to Saint Croix especially when festivities like St Croix Agricultural Fair in mid-February or Virgin Island Festival or Cruzan Christmas Festival as well as horse races are planned. The Cruzan Christmas festival is celebrated through the late December. Several times a year, there is a “Jump-up” nighttime festival in Christiansted or a Sunset Jazz where local jazz musicians will participate in playing on the beach. Mardi Gras has also its time and festivities may include a local Mardi Croix parade or a dog parade. In May, there is a Half Ironman Triathlon with its 1.2 mile (1.9km) swim, a 56 mile (90km) bike ride and a 13.1 mile (21.1 km) run. They describe this event as the “Beauty and the Beast” because the bicycle route in the triathlon involves a steep hill known as the “Beast”.

An international Airport “The Henry E Rohlsen International Airport” allows the islanders to travel to their US destinations, Puerto Rico, and the Eastern Caribbean. There are also seaplanes between the islands and departing and arriving in Christiansted Harbor. The Virgin Islands may have been a US territory but it is maintained as a free port in a separate customs zone and as such,
travelers to the US and Puerto Rico must clear customs but does not need to present passport. The National Science Foundation has helped in the installation of a giant 5 million-dollar antenna with 82 feet in diameter. A 260-ton dish is used to explore the universe acting with the nine other antennas around the world as a single giant telescope where data can be shared over the internet. It is an eye in the sky, in a strategic position.

About education, the Saint Croix School District operates the public school but it also exists multiple private schools like Montessori school, the AX Academy, Ste Mary’s Catholic School, The Manor school, The Good Hope Country Day School etc. There are also colleges on the island like the University of the Virgin Islands, St Croix Campus and Barry University for physician assistant training program. For the tourists, there are many points of interest:

In Frederiksted, a Victorian era type of architecture dating from the colonial time with several historic structures like the St Patrick Catholic Cathedral built in 1840, The Customs House and other buildings which have fallen into ruins, As already stated, in January, it is Carnival time and the town is more lively allowing also cruise ships passengers to visit the port. The Salt River National Historical Park is an Ecologic reserve. This park while it preserves upland watersheds, mangrove forests, is the only known site where Christopher Columbus and his crew set foot on the island.

The Fort Sale is a remaining earthworks fortification dating from the French colonial period around 1617. Now it also preserves an historical prehistorical and archeological past like in example a ball court in the Caribbean. Finally, the “Creque Dam Road” and a 15 acres of the Rain Forest can be visited. The dam is a 150 feet high structure. Mahogany trees board a road in a yellow cedar with also Tibet trees (mother’s tongue) seem to rustle in the wind like to invite you to inhale the scent of local fruits. This forest is a private property and the owners allows visitors on the premise.

In Christiansted, the fort Christianityvaern built in 1749 and other building for the National Park Service like the Christiansted National Historic Site. Buck Island Reef National Monument, a 176 acres’ island (71ha) just north of Saint Croix with surrounding reefs, very popular destination for the snorkelers. It is also a US coast guard weather station and a lemon shark breeding ground Green Cay managed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Close by the Tamarind Reef, another attraction for the snorkelers. The Farmer market which offer to anyone the choice of local fruits or vegetables and even juices. You can enjoy a typical Cruzan breakfast and it is open all-year around.

There are two bioluminescent bays on Saint Croix at Salt River Bay National Historical Park and Ecological Reserve and another one at Altona Lagoon. These bioluminescent phenomena are due to the red mangrove trees surround the water. Both bays share different characteristics. Altona is larger in size but very shallow allowing the visitors to see the marine life swimming while lightning and agitating the water. The Salt River Bay is smaller in size but deeper and because it is deeper more forms bioluminescence is seen like the “Ctenophore”. (comb Jellies). A third organism is also found there in the Salt River a marine fire worm “Odontosyllis” which perform a ritual when mating under the full moon and the female rising to the surface leaving the green puddle to allow the males to fertilize the eggs.

The waters of Saint Croix and the other Virgin Islands are warm and invite year around people to perform in scuba diving, Kayaking, Surfing, Snorkeling, and any other water sports like kite surfing, jet skiing, fishing, sailing, swimming paddle-boarding etc. The two most popular underwater site for scuba divers are the Frederiksted Pier and the Drop-off into deep water at Salt River National Historical Park and ecological Reserve. Frederiksted is known for reef diving. One can appreciate the abundant seahorse population and the shallow waters with its sandy water around the Pier are ideal for recreational diving and undersea photography. Christiansted is the former capital of the Danish West indies. This is the only United States Monument (National Park) that is underwater. The park covers over 850 acres including the island, with a sandy beach, picnic table and barbecue pits. There are two underwater trails: a turtle Bay trail and an East End Trail. There is also Sprat Point a 30-acre peninsula and nature
Saint Croix is the home of dozen historic sugar mills dotting its landscape, most of them built at the end of the 18th century between 1759 and 1800 while the island was under Danish rule. After Santo Domingo, Saint Croix was one of the richest sugar producing island in the Caribbean. While visiting the island, one can’t miss these magnificent structures remaining of the old sugar plantations. They serve as a reminder of the time when “Sugar” was the most important production on the island and Saint Croix was known as the Garden of the West Indies. It is believed that it existed more than 200 sugar plantations which unfortunately disintegrated or were destroyed with time of the 1878 fire. Many of them can be visited and some have been restored by the Saint Croix Landmarks Society. A sugar plantation consisted in many buildings which housed the residents and the workers working on the production of the sugar cane:

1- A recognizable building where the sugar cane is crushed by a machine often driven by an animal.
2- A factory called “boiling house” is the area where the sugar cane juice is crystallized.
3- A cure house where the sugar settled and the molasses is separated and dripped into crystals.
4- A shop for the production of the barrels to help transporting the sugar and the sub-products for exportation.
5- A stable where horses or mules, cows or other animals are kept.
6- An overseer’s house where a manager (master boy) lives.
7- A slave village with multiple cabins to quarter the workers.
8- A cook house (kitchen) away from the other building because of the generated heat and possible hazard.

Business at a Sugar Mills was not complicated. There are three upright iron plated rollers using cogs protected by a stone and coral exterior. The trade winds blow the sails with such a force that turn the machinery while the workers fed sugar cane to the stalks though the rollers. The sugar cane juice produced, run downhill in a sluice to the factory building where the slave laborers initiate the extraction of different products for exportation: Sugar, Molasses, and Rum. The dried out leftover cane stalks were also used as fuel for fires to boil the sugar cane.

No one can show enough emotion at the site of
these ruins in Saint Croix. While they are part of a daily panoramic view, they have to be recognized for their beauty. Most of the machinery from the mills is surely gone to metal scrapping or dismantled and the wooden frame which used to stand on the top of the sugar mills has been destroyed over time. Almost all the 200 built have tumbled into ruins. Some may have been restored to their former splendor but many nowadays are part of private properties and even you can find some originality in new owners incorporating this old structure to their new construction. Many of the Sugar Mills may be still open to the public, rebuilt or not but you may be welcome to photograph them like the one we recently discovered on the “Buccaneer’ s Hotel property one of the most famous beach resort on the island. I urge a visitor to take the opportunity to stairs up into a sugar mill and experience perhaps the sensation of being a slave or an owner on such plantation during the colonial time. You may discover the ruins of a dungeon. Or a small bell tower, or a cistern or any remnant of equipment scattered across the grounds.

I wanted to touch this subject because it is a little different from what a French colony mill looked like in their production of sugar cane and their fine sub-products. The sugar mills and the plantations represent the Danish colonial heritage of Saint Croix. I tried to go over the history and the culture of the people of the Virgin Islands and because I share my duty as an orthopedic surgeon and a traumatologist at the Governor Juan F Lewis Hospital on the island, I found a need to know better the people and their customs. The colonial past brings to the island its pride and now when you hear people talking about a Cruzan or Crucian, I am sure that you will understand better that they were originally from Saint Croix in the Virgin Islands especially when they can trace back their origins on the island before 1927, date Saint Croix was purchased by the United States. I invite you to come and visit Saint Croix and the other west indies US Virgin Islands.

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Boca Raton FL (3-11-21)
Haïti : la descente aux enfers se poursuit:

A chaque fois que l’on croyait que notre cher pays, Haïti, avait déjà atteint le point le plus bas de son existence de nation, et qu’elle ne pouvait, désormais, que commencer à remonter la pente et à renaitre de ses cendres, on réalise malheureusement qu’elle avait des profondeurs encore plus nébuleuses à atteindre, et que le renouveau espéré n’était pas pour demain.

On s’enfonce chaque jour, un peu plus dans l’abime. Comme pour dire : «abissus, abissum invocat » Le dernier clou appliqué au cercueil de la nation est la débâcle que vient de connaitre la police nationale, unique force légale du pays, lors de son intervention au Village de Dieu. Elle s’est tristement inclinée par devant les bandits du village, abandonnant sans coup férir, Chars et cadavres de policiers tombés dans l’exercice de leurs devoirs. Ces policiers attendent encore, dans leur sommeil de morts et dans leur chair mutilée, le renfort tant réclamé…Et personne du haut commandement de la police nationale, n’a encore dit pourquoi les renforts attendus n’étaient jamais arrivés.

Dire Village de Dieu, c’est parler d’un petit périmètre de quelques centaines de maisons dont on aurait pu boucler les sorties et assiéger toute la Zone. Pourtant, c’est devenu le Waterloo de la police Nationale d’Haïti. Et de nous demander de bon droit, qu’est ce que l’état contrôle vraiment en termes de territoire de ce pays s’il se révèle impuissant à gérer un périmètre aussi restreint que le village de Dieu ?

Les leçons tirées de cette débâcle sont énormes de conséquences. D’abord les policiers ont compris qu’il n’y a aucun salut pour eux à venir de l’institution policière qui les coiffe, et qu’ils doivent eux-mêmes s’organiser pour monter leur propre défense. Ils n’ont plus confiance dans leurs chefs hiérarchiques qui les ont lâchement abandonnés au moment où ils avaient le plus besoin de leur support..Ils manifestent de temps à autres leur anxiété face à une institution dont les contradictions internes sont désormais visibles au grand jour et sont entrain de saper les bases vermolues de l’institution.

La population a, elle aussi, perdu les dernières lueurs de confiance qu’elle pouvait encore avoir dans ce régime dont elle se demande comment il va pouvoir les défendre et les protéger s’il est incapable de se protéger lui-même face aux bandits..Cette semaine,la peur et l’angoisse sont montées de plusieurs crans au baromètre des tensions sociales, et la population partout est aux abois. Personne ne sait qui va être la prochaine cible de ce kidnapping ahurissant qui continue d’appauvrir ce qui restait encore de la classe moyenne du pays. Les enfants sont de plus en plus contraints de rester à la maison faute de pouvoir aller à l’école pour acquérir le pain de l’instruction. On vit un jour à la fois, sans être capable de faire des projets d’envergure ou à long terme.

Une femme qui a été relâchée pour aller chercher la rançon, après qu’ils avaient été kidnappés, elle et son mari, s’entendra dire tout simplement par les ravisseurs que l’argent apporté, était nettement insuffisant pour sa libération et celle de son mari. Elle fut violée plusieurs fois de suite par des bandits sous stupéfiants, et laissée pour morte sur la piste de
l’ancienne aviation de Port-au-Prince. Son mari fut retenu malgré le versement des trois quarts de la somme requise. Son cadavre fut retrouvé quelque temps plus tard et attend encore aujourd’hui dans une morgue de la capitale pour le repos final de son âme. Le couple vivait à l’étranger et était rentré uniquement au pays pour organiser les funérailles de la mère du mari.

Nous étions depuis quelques années un pays que les touristes étrangers ne fréquentaient plus. Il n’y avait que les rares patriotes qui défilaient vers Haïti à des moments précis de l’année dont le carnaval, les fêtes champêtres et les fins d’année pour apporter quelques dollars et un nouveau souffle au pays. Maintenant qu’ils ont peur de venir chez eux, d’être kidnappés, rançonnés et tués, à quel tableau sombre et funeste le pays va-t-il devoir désormais faire face ?

On n’aurait jamais cru que le pays qui nous a tous bercés serait devenu un jour, un tel enfer pour ses enfants. Jamais au grand jamais. Dire que nous vivrions de telles monstruosités et que nos dirigeants pourraient être d’une telle incompétence est une chose difficile à admettre. Nous nous imaginons difficilement que des Haïtiens, toutes tendances confondues, auraient été capables de faire tant de mal à leur pays. Pourtant ils sont en train de détruire tout ce qu’il restait de rêves et d’illusions pour les durs à cuire comme moi-même qui n’avaient jamais rien négocié de leur patriotisme et qui rêvaient toujours d’un lendemain meilleur pour Haïti.

Mes collègues de partout, de vrais patriotes pour la plupart, expriment de plus en plus leur indignation et leur frustration face à une crise qui n’a que trop duré. A travers les actes barbares perpétrés sur de simples citoyens, livrés à eux-mêmes sans secours ni recours, c’est l’âme Haïtienne qui s’enlise. C’est la fierté d’être Haïtien qui se dilue dans les basses manœuvres, les combines louches et les intérêts mesquins d’un petit groupe qui cherche l’argent et le pouvoir à tout prix...

Le cauchemar est bien réel et sa fin n’est pas pour demain. Parfois en nous réveillant d’un cauchemar au milieu de la nuit, ou d’un rêve terrifiant, on a tendance à presser sur les paupières, à forcer le sommeil à l’envers cherchant ainsi à renverser le cauchemar. Dans le cas qui nous préoccupe, nous rêvons encore les yeux ouverts, espérant à un dénouement bien plus heureux. Riches ou pauvres, éduqués ou non, politiciens, religieux ou autres, il est temps de comprendre que l’on ne peut aller plus loin dans la déconfiture et la gangrène qui empoisonnent le tissu social Haïtien.

Étrangers de tous bords, vous qui avez toujours soutenu un camp ou l’autre, attisant ainsi la méfiance entre nos frères, jusque à quand persisterez vous dans vos œuvres destructives envers Haïti ? Vous avez essayé les mêmes méthodes à chaque fois pour revenir toujours à la case de départ. Cessez de faire le jeu des intérêts partisans ; Encouragez plutôt un dialogue franc entre les Haïtiens qui reconnaîtraient le bien-fondé des arguments venus d’en face, cherchant ainsi dans l’adversaire ce qui est bon à émuler. Ainsi ils cesseront de s’entredéchirer. Le pays se meurt sous nos laideurs et n’en peut plus de nos caprices et de nos hasitations. Nous avons tous besoin de stopper cette balkanisation du pays que nous avons légué nos ancêtres. Sinon, c’est l’implosion et l’auto-destruction. Car si le pays continue de descendre à ce rythme vertigineux, dans moins de dix ans, il n’y aura plus de pays pour nos enfants.

Rony Jean-Mary, M.D.
CoralSprings, Florida,
le 28 Mars 2021.

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Les derniers jours du malade souffrant.

Reynald Altéma, MD.

Michel Justin, mieux connu par son titre maitre Justin, un patricien, un patriarche, avait toujours joui d’une bonne santé. Une maladie le fauchait rarement. Cependant, deux jours plutôt, il ressentit un simple malaise qui dura toute la journée. Le jour après, il ne se sentit pas mieux, mais il put vaquer à ses activités. Dans la soirée, son corps eut un frisson, une sensation étrange, incontrôlable, accompagnée de sueurs. Il sut alors qu’il était en proie à une infection. Cette position de victime, une inconnue, ce nouvel état secouaient sa fierté tandis que son corps tremblait et qu’il avait la chair de poule.


Notaire de profession, il gagnait bien sa vie. Son cabinet principal était à Port-au-Prince et il avait une succursale à Gressier où il s’en allait deux fois par semaine, les jours de pleine activité du marché public pour un négoce très lucratif. Marié et père de cinq enfants avec son épouse et de quatre autres avec deux maîtresses, l’une à Port-au-Prince, l’autre à Gressier. L’écart d’âges entre lui et chaque femme était de cinq ans ou de son multiple ; la plus jeune, celle de Gressier avait un écart de quinze ans. Chaque maîtresse prenait un grand plaisir à l’alimenter. Celle de Port-au-Prince s’occupait de son déjeuner du midi. Celle de Gressier était prête pour toute éventualité. S’il devait dormir à Gressier à cause d’intempéries, il passerait la nuit chez elle. Elles aimaient cuisiner avec le même essor qu’il avait pour déguster leurs plats succulents. Au fil du temps, les habitudes avaient durci et avaient pris racine. La dame à Gressier, Gisèle, se considérait comme sa femme lorsqu’il était sur place ces deux jours. Dans sa pensée, ces deux jours lui appartenaient et elle ne pouvait s’imaginer de les passer sans le voir. La dame à Port-au-Prince qui habitait près de son cabinet, le voyait à sa convenance, le matin, l’après-midi, le soir et dans ce sens se considérait comme son épouse de facto.

Son épouse à la maison, Carline, mère de ses quatre garçons et une fille, l’aînée, avait donné sa vie pour sauvegarder le mariage. De tempérament malléable, elle avait supporté en silence les escapades de son mari, car elle était de cette génération de femmes qui ne croient pas dans la dissolution du lien conjugal. Elle n’aimait guère sa situation, mais n’en parlait que rarement, et ceci seulement avec une poignée d’amies ou sa fratrie. Elle s’engagea de préférence à superviser la scolarité de sa progéniture et elle le fit avec ardeur et du succès retentissant. Inutile de dire qu’entre son épouse et ses maîtresses, une froideur existait, une trêve tacite restait en vigueur. Elles suivirent des règles pour s’éviter. La demeure conjugale et le quartier résidentiel étaient hors limite. Il ne fallait surtout pas s’y aventurer. Ainsi Carline n’irait pas à aucun des deux cabinets et certainement ne l’accompagnerait pas à Gressier. Les maîtresses se gardaient de s’acheminer proche du fief d’une rivale. De plus, il leur avait interdit de s’immiscer dans les affaires de son foyer. Vivant sous sa férules, elles n’avaient pas d’autre choix. Il avait réussi dans ce jeu délicat et potentiellement brutal avec une combinaison de charme, de prouesse sensuelle, et son statut.
économique aidant. Épicurien de première classe, il entretenait un appétit vorace pour la chair, pour assouvir sa faim et sa libido. Ses amis en le taquinant disaient que ses compagnes se complaisaient à satisfaire le premier appétit tandis qu’il s’acharnait par le second à leur plaire. On citait comme preuve sa fécondité.


Dans l’espace d’une semaine, mangeant et buvant à peine, sa condition alla de mal en pis. Maintenant garni d’un faciès émacié, il avait les lèvres sèches, les yeux dans des orbites profondes comme des cratères et il sombra dans le délire. Il parlait d’animaux sans tête, des blattes qui grimpent sur les murs et de son ami Marcel qui le visitait. Cet ami disparut dans une inondation dix ans plutôt. La fièvre retourna et cette fois, il avait une toux tintée de sang, et la respiration devint de plus en plus difficile. La fièvre le rendait faible ; les muscles se transformèrent en un organe pourvoyeur d’une sensation pénible, insupportable et constante. Devenu grabataire en un temps record et n’étant plus ingambe, il dépendait des autres pour sa survie.


Il avait toujours traitée comme une princesse, elle était sa seule fille, et la mettait au parfum. Étant dans le secret des dieux, elle jouait le double rôle de fille et de conseillère. Au fur et à mesure, ses désirs de vivre étaient de plus en plus difficiles. La fièvre le rendait faible ; les muscles se transformèrent en un organe pourvoyeur d’une sensation pénible, insupportable et constante. Devenu grabataire en un temps record et n’étant plus ingambe, il dépendait des autres pour sa survie.

Hortense, sa fille ainée, avait pris l’initiative de ses besoins sanitaires. Veuve et sans enfant, après la mort de son mari huit ans plutôt, Hortense avait décidé de prendre soin de son père comme une mère le ferait pour un fils. Elle s’accordait à sa volonté de hue et de dia. Hortense lui professait un amour de chiot et lui pardonna ses indiscrétions. Son épouse qui ne pouvait se souvenir d’un pareil événement de récente mémoire. Il avait une fièvre aussi haute que 104 degrés Fahrenheit, une toux constante et sou
qu’elle devra aller elle-même pour ce traitement, advienne que pourra, car « Ses gens qui se croient éduqués, ignorent les réalités de notre milieu », avait-t-elle dit à haute voix. L’autre maitresse, inquiète, mais moins téméraire, se contenta d’aller prier à l’église et de passer dans le quartier pour prendre de ses nouvelles.

Gisèle vint un matin avec son fils, Joseph le notaire, qui voulut rendre une visite de support à son père mourant. La fissure à fleur de peau entre les deux camps en un clin d’œil s’élargit en un fossé profond, glissant, ainsi détrant la hache de guerre. Dans une démonstration de meurs viles et éhontées, Gisèle injuria Carlène et Hortense avec un vacarme, attirant non seulement un branle-bas chez les Justin, du jamais vu, mais par ce faisant une polarisation immédiate entre les deux camps. L’ironie fut les larmes sincères versées par Gisèle une fois qu’elle se rendit compte de son impuissance d’aider son amant malade et mourant. « C’est une décision méchante de m’interdire de voir mon bien-aimé une dernière fois avant sa mort », gémit-elle en vain et trop tard, car elle aurait pu le faire si elle avait agi autrement. Son fils qui eut à peine vu son père, se joignit à sa mère, le cœur gros du refus inflexible d’une part mais aussi du comportement obscène de sa mère. Ils retournèrent chez eux bredouilles. Maitre Justin entre temps était dans un sommeil profond ; le bruit le réveilla. En essayant de sortir du lit, il tomba et subit une entorse à la cheville, une sensation pénible. « Mon Dieu ! », hurla Hortense en le trouvant au sol en souffrance. Elle décida sur le champ qu’il ne restera plus seul. Tancées rudement et en public en leur domicile, Hortense et sa mère décidèrent de mettre un frein aux visites des membres des deux autres camps. Les hostilités entre les enfants légitimes et illégitimes s’amorcèrent.

La vigie se faisait autour de son chevet à tour de rôle, sous la direction d’Hortense qui avait avisé ce devoir comme un véritable sacerdoce. Cette vigie ne pourrait comprendre que les enfants et des proches de sa mère. Les autres fils furent exclus d’un trait. Ses exigences sanitaires devinrent une corvée, car il était maintenant incontinent. Ses habits étaient toujours trempés de sueurs et souillés de sang et de déchets. Il portait maintenant une couche-culotte. Son corps n’exsudait plus la fragrance de parfum luxe, mais plutôt l’odeur déroutante de la maladie et de pertes corporelles.

Les hommes de la famille ne purent tolérer la maladie. Tous costauds comme lui, mais comme le chêne sous le vent, il n’avaient pas la flexibilité de la souplesse du roseau d’éviter la rupture. Ils étaient impuissants en observant la déconfiture ou l’implosion d’une forteresse. La vue du malade qui jadis fut le symbole de la fermeté et de la puissance masculine les effraya. Les femmes furent les soignantes efficaces. Hortense fut la meilleure dans sa dévotion.


Il eut une crise de grand mal, de temps à autre et d’une façon plus fréquente. Chaque crise venait avec une incontinence de selles et d’urine. La fièvre et la toux augmentèrent en fréquence et intensité. L’imminence de la fin de sa vie était évidente. Les complications se multiplièrent et de façon rapide. Sa perte de poids fut vertigineuse. Hortense fut présente pendant cette fin sinistre. Il eut un paroxysme de toux avec de plus en plus de sang. Il eut finalement un jet projectile de sang et il sombra. Hortense avait
méticuleusement essuyé le dégât avant de prévenir les autres de son départ éternel.

Son départ de ce monde accéléra la scission entre les deux camps. Hortense et sa mère avaient la possession du cadavre et pouvaient organiser les funérailles comme bon leur semblait. Leur absence à la veillée fut intolérable pour les maitresses bien qu’elles eussent la permission de venir aux funérailles. À l’église le jour des obsèques, les trois mères occupèrent des bancs séparés et ne se parlèrent pas ; idem pour leurs enfants qui du jour au lendemain devinrent divisés en camps ou tribus. Chaque perte de privilège accentuait la mésentente, aiguisait l’âgeur des sentiments blessés, ramenait à la surface des souvenirs d’incidents déploïsants du passé où l’amour-propre fut froissé à cause du statut d’illégitime. Le frère aimé d’hier est devenu l’ennemi de dorénavant. La maille principale de la chaine était cassée à jamais avec la disparition de maitre Justin. Leur présence à l’église loin de concrétiser une occasion de chanter le Kumbaya fut plutôt l’estuaire alimenté par la confluence du flot d’années d’affronts à petit feu, subis en silence, pardonnés, mais jamais oubliés, entrelacés avec des heures de délice, telle une sève aigre-douce, jamais ni refusée, ni abreuvante, mais toujours recherchée.

Maitre Justin une fois enseveli ne pouvait plus remplir le rôle de ballast ni de timonier pour maintenir l’équilibre et éviter le naufrage. Pratiquant un style de vie toléré mais sans sanction légale ou sociale, il avait fait de son mieux pour prévenir l’existence de différends à cause de l’existence d’enfants de différentes mères et de son vivant il avait réussi à maintenir la paix. Cependant, il ne pouvait empêcher l’infamie sociale associée au terme illégitime, un terme ayant l’effet d’un glaive blessant et dont l’accumulation au fil des ans frôle une dérive potentielle. Ce terme crée une situation délicate ambiante. Une situation qui peut rester en état de trêve aussi longtemps que possible, mais qui peut faire explosion soudainement à la moindre incitation et dégainer des passions incontrôlables. Comme le cumulus d’un beau jour d’été remplacé par un orage effarant et un ciel gris dans la courte durée d’un cillement.

Reynald Altéma, MD.

Published on the AMHE NY Facebook and AMHE Facebook page last two weeks
Articles parus sur la page Facebook de l’AMHE NY et de l’AMHE durant la dernière semaine

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MC - La jeune chorale de l’Université Nouvelle Grand’Anse. Jérémie.

And more…

Le Newsletter est publié toutes les 3 semaines.
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Usque Tandem COVID-19, a year after

Maxime Coles MD

We are all afraid of what we can’t control. It is certainly not easy to accept what the vector genomes may bring to our somatic cells once the mRNA vaccine is administered to an individual. In a country like Germany, where almost 160 young individuals less than 40 year of age, have lost their life to COVID-19, an explanation is mandatory. Everybody should have the understanding that a fragment of the RNA of the vector genome can integrate their human somatic cells.

They should know about the consequences. The mRNA” vaccine” derives from a completely new technology. A year has already passed and we have suffered enough with this pandemic. 2.6 million around the world have already been victims of this virus which keep on metamorphosing on us. The United States of America has seen also its share of victims with a half of a million of dead. This situation can’t stand forever.

When in 2020, players in the NBA started to become infected with the virus SARS-CoV-2, the organization panicked and decided to close the season. The NCAA hesitated on following the example, also prior to deciding on the fate of their annual basketball tournament they chose to pursue the athletic activities without any fan in the stand. Then, the World Health Organization (WHO) finally call the situation a “pandemic”. If many have tested positive for the virus, one should have already thought about a day of recognition for all the public health workers who have placed their own lives on the line to care for others.

We will remember the painful experience of being a victim. How many close friends, parents, teachers have all gone through but definitely, we will remember always the need to be prepared for the next one to come in a not-too-distant future. Nations which have taken the most pro-active steps have certainly suffered the least. Inversely, nations whose leaders have pretended that the virus was not a substantial threat, have suffered the most. History will always remember the United States of America, Brazil and Sweden for their approach to the pandemic.

When China reported that a new pathogen was causing an atypical pneumonia, a dozen of patients was already suffering from the disease at a Wuhan hospital. Nobody was sure that they needed to consider that such an infection would extend to a global pandemic, although the world would have gone more than a decade without seeing one like the strain of influenza H1N1.

Then, the virus began to spread through China and the neighboring nations and still, we did not see it coming as a pandemic. Some were saying that it was going to disappear like a miracle other were hesitant to acknowledge that it may reach an international expansion. Then, in late January 2020, the WHO had to declare it by its name: A Pandemic.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) tried to identify a way allowing to identify the pathogen spreading in the communities. Meanwhile, the virus crossed international borders and reached the west coast of China extending to Italy and Southern Europe and then the East coast. On March 11, 2020 all foreign travel to the United States of America were suspended. At this exact time, less than 40 Americans were dead already.

In April 2020, the confirmed cases of COVID-19 infection have quadrupled in California. Hospitals in New-York were overrun by the infected cases. The healthcare workers in the front line were deprived of protective equipment. Federal and State governments were looking all over the world for companies to produce masks and other protective gears. A first wave hit New-York and New Orleans around Memorial
Day and a second wave was seen in the southern States. Soon, hospital beds were fully occupied bringing death and desolation. The Military and the National guards were called for help and military hospital ships were used to supply in hospital beds. On the hill, the politicians got involved shifting the blame for not being ready for such catastrophe.

Scientists were looking for ways of treatment and they were already hoping that a vaccine against the virus would be the solution to our problems. A new technology using messenger RNA was the last resort to remove us from the situation. The pandemic was ongoing and many at the white house, congress and senate become as well infected following the thanksgiving outbreaks. The coronavirus itself and the spike protein used to detect it, become part of the solution with the creation of the new “mRNA vaccines”. Johnson and Johnson, Pfizer and Moderna companies came out with their specific version of vaccines using the spike protein in a new technology.

A year later in the pandemic, we are still fighting the virus. This time we may have a new arm to fight more efficiently in the goal of reaching a herd immunity. The active distribution of the vaccine has coincided with the numbers of hospitalized patients fallen down. More than 100 million American have received the doses. We can’t say the same for other parts of the world especially in the low-income nations. New strains of the virus are encountered around the world especially in places where no vaccine can be available to millions of people living on the planet.

When can we expect a return to normal activities? Are we going to have enough doses to vaccinate the population at risk? Or to vaccine the population we need to reach the immunity level? We are facing a problem because many are refusing to take the vaccine. More, recent problems of the company Astra Zeneca, an Anglo Swedish firm which made the promises to provide a vaccine with only one dose. It was also supposed to be cheaper and many doses were expected to bring help to the poor countries.

Following a mass administration of the new Astra Zeneca vaccine, around 30 cases of cerebral cavernous thrombosis with fatality were reported around the world. Countries like Norway, Austria, Italy, Thailand, Bulgaria, Romania, Ireland, Germany and even France decided to pull back the vaccine from their armamentarium. The United States was counting on this cheap vaccine to continue their campaign of vaccination. We learned last week that more than 30 million de doses are stocked in a factory in Italy unable to be distributed.

The sanitary and economic crisis in which we are living, appears to be reaching a critical geopolitical condition when we were hoping an end to this pandemic. Meanwhile a new strain of the coronavirus, unable to be detected by the actual PCR test, was discovered in Bretagne region of France. Nobody know for sure how many individuals with this strain, thinking they were negative for the virus, is circulating in the population.

If we become enthusiastic at the discovery of a new mRNA vaccine, we have seen our epidemiologists, virologists and infectious disease specialists lose a little their confidence about the solution to eliminate the COVID-19 virus. We still wish to have the vaccine available to reach the targeted 70-90% vaccination of the population, looking for the desired immunity level. The vaccination is now extended to the young older than 18. Many universities like Rutgers in New Jersey, has imposed a mandatory vaccination prior to return on the campus. The one still following the courses on computers are for the moment exempted.

Americans appear to be on target to reach their goal in the distribution and the administration of the vaccine. They are trying to follow the successful path of countries like Israel and England. We remain anxious to see the way the authorities will approach the one who demonstrate their hesitance in accepting the vaccine.
We continue to keep our social distancing vaccinated or not, we wear our masks and we wash our hands periodically. We may have lost the habits of hanging in a restaurant or performing in a public gym or even going to a movie theater but public pools have opened their doors and I am still hesitant in using my privileges in the over-55-complex where I live. I am not too brave to adventure on the beach either. But we are aware that bleach and chlorine are effective at destroying SARS-CoV-2 and the CDC has repeated that there is no evidence that you may catch the virus from swimming in a pool. It is certainly different if you adventure in a lake or a river. Unfortunately, no scientist has opiniated on salt water either and we can’t assert that you are protected when we are using our privileges in walking on the sand of our beautiful beaches.

In Minnesota this week, 89 persons contacted the virus on a population of 800,000 fully vaccinated with both doses of the mRNA vaccine. We know that the vaccines are not 100% effective and it is expected that more infected cases will show up. We know also that the wear of mask following the reception of the vaccine is still mandatory. We should not have any doubt about the efficacy of the vaccine. 72 of the 89 patients have been interviewed and 30 of them had COVID-19 symptoms prior to receiving the vaccine. The CDC is tracking those cases through the country. One assuring note, none of those 89 persons have died from the disease.

I would not like to finish my column on Covid-19 without talking briefly about the story of the “Giglio Island”, an island in Tuscany where mysteriously everybody is immunized against the virus SARS-COV-2. This article was sent to me by Jacques Arpin, our webmaster who know well our passion at discovering facts about this disease. I have already published the article on our AMHE Facebook page. I want to take the opportunity to thank Jacques for his devotion to the cause of the AMHE.

To continue the story of the Tuscany Island of Giglio, it was noted that many visitors infected with COVID-19 visited the island and no inhabitant has ever tested positive for the virus. Nobody on the island wear any mask. The explanation may be found in the facts that they were the victims of previous atypical pneumonias caused by other viruses. Since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, only one case of atypical pneumonia with SARS-CoV-19 was recorded. Giglio Island is known also for the site where a cruise ship “Costa Concordia” made shipwreck in 2012 by fault of the captain.

Giglio is called a COVID-19 free island where thousand of visitors have vacationed and only one of the 800 inhabitants had symptoms of the disease. This island brings back the story we have already reported in the past on the Eastern Canadian territories, the islands of Prince Edward, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, in one of our AMHE Newsletter. In these insular provinces of Canada, the COVID-19 was a rare occurrence. Many postulated that perhaps the maritime air and the wind influence the transmission of the virus unless the inhabitants are doted of a special mechanism of defense. Other islands like Sardinia, Elbe even Haiti have also shown less cases. Perhaps our scientists will find time to review these particularities and resolve the mysteries of these islands around the world.

Maxime Coles MD

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To ICD or not ICD?
That is the question.

Background: Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM) is an important topic relevant to the Haitian community. It’s often part of small differential that is commonly seen in the Haitian population which include hypertensive cardiomyopathy and cardiac amyloidosis causing Heart failure with preserved ejection fraction (HfPEF). They all can have poorly treated hypertension, heart failure and increase in wall thickness on echocardiography. The distinction is relevant because treatment is different and importantly risk stratification for sudden cardiac death is an essential part of the evaluation. Furthermore, family counseling and screening is essential in HCM and in some types of Cardiac amyloidosis. In our review, we will be covering a case of HCM with a primary focus on sudden cardiac death (SCD) risk stratification. HCM puts patients at risk for SCD. HCM patients of advanced age are less likely than their younger counterparts to experience SCD. There are limited data and variable guidelines regarding primary prevention Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillators (ICD) in older HCM patients. This is relevant because most of our Haitian patients that we see with suspected HCM are indeed older in age.

Case: We present a 60-year-old female with shortness of breath found to be in new-onset atrial fibrillation. She underwent electrical cardioversion for symptomatic atrial fibrillation and was initiated on beta-blockade and anticoagulation. Transthoracic echocardiography revealed a normal ejection fraction, severely increased LV wall thickness and a dynamic mid-cavitary gradient, all concerning for HCM. Her LVOT gradient was 20 mmHg. Follow up cardiac MRI showed diffuse late gadolinium enhancement and a mid-ventricular septal wall thickness of 20mm, confirming the diagnosis of HCM. A thin-walled apical aneurysm was also noted. The patient was hospitalized for 7 days and was monitored continuously on telemetry; no episodes of ventricular ectopy were noted. Notably, she had no personal or family history of sudden death or syncope.

Decision-making: This patient had at least two independent markers of increased SCD risk: apical aneurysm and extensive LGE. However, her age, normal EF, absence of a family history of SCD and of a personal history of syncope & NSVT, all decreased the risk of ventricular arrhythmias. Based on the European Society of Cardiology’s (ESC) HCM Risk-SCD Calculator and the 2017 AHA/ACC/HRS guidelines for the prevention of SCD, an ICD was not deemed to be indicated. As such, in a shared decision with the patient, she was sent home with a 30-day event monitor. Three short runs (4-7 beats) of NSVT were eventually noted on the ambulatory monitor. Only then was an ICD inserted, under a II-B recommendation per the 2011 AHA/ACC/HRS guidelines. According to the new AHA/ACC 2020 guidelines, it would be a class II-A indication to offer ICD based on the presence of LV apical aneurysm.

Conclusion: This case highlights the evidence gaps in SCD risk stratification for patients with late onset HCM and underscores the importance of identifying the right patient population.

Minimally Invasive Direct Coronary Arterial Bypass (MIDCAB) for Unprotected Left Main Coronary Stenosis

Introduction: Single-vessel disease of the left anterior descending (LAD) coronary artery may be surgically revascularized by left internal mammary artery (LIMA) grafting either through a sternotomy or a non-sternotomy approach (MIDCAB). Left main coronary artery disease is usually managed by coronary artery bypass grafting (CABG) with cardiopulmonary bypass for circulatory
support. We present a case of minimally invasive direct coronary artery bypass for the management of a high-risk patient with non-ST-elevation myocardial infarction (NSTEMI) and new heart failure with reduced ejection fraction (HFrEF).

**Case Presentation:** A very active and high-functioning 96-year-old male with extensive peripheral vascular disease (PAD), as well as known coronary artery disease, presented with NSTEMI. The patient was subsequently found to have new HFrEF (Left Ventricular Ejection Fraction = 20%). Due to a newly reduced ejection fraction and recurrent chest pain despite maximal medical management, cardiac catheterization was performed and revealed a 95% occlusion of the left main coronary artery (LMCA) at the ostium (Fig 1) as well as 50% occlusion of the left circumflex artery in a left dominant system. Surgical consultation for conventional CABG was obtained, however given the patient’s prohibitive surgical risk - STS (short-term-risk) risk of mortality score of 19.8% - as well as the advantageous ostial anatomy of the lesion, it was decided to perform Impella-assisted percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI) of the LMCA. For vascular access planning in the context of the patient’s known PAD, a CT angiogram of the abdomen and pelvis was obtained, yielding evidence of extensive bilateral femoral PAD and therein precluding the use of an Impella device for hemodynamic support. Given the paucity of data supporting medical management of LMCA disease, as well as the extensive area of at-risk myocardium in the setting of the patient’s left-dominant circulation, medical management was not considered a viable solution for achieving the patient’s goals of enhanced survival. Upon further discussion with heart team, the decision was made to pursue surgical revascularization with a MIDCAB procedure. The patient was successfully managed with this approach, in which a left internal mammary artery was anastomosed to the left anterior descending coronary artery without immediate complications.

**Conclusion:** We believe the MIDCAB may serve as a useful management strategy in isolated patients who bear either 1) unacceptably high surgical risk, or 2) prohibitive comorbidities for either CABG with sternotomy or high-risk PCI with Impella support. Furthermore, this case highlights the utility of multidisciplinary heart teams in the management of complex high-risk coronary artery stenosis.
Marie Circée Bruno Mocombe passed away on March 12, 2021 at Mount Sinai South Nassau Hospital, Oceanside, New York.
Marie Circée was born in Terrier-Rouge, North East, Haiti. She attended elementary school at St. Joseph de Cluny and completed her secondary studies at the College of Regina Assumpta in Cap Haitien. In Port-au-Prince, she attended the Centre Culturel of Impasse Lavaud. She migrated to Canada where she attended College de Sherbrooke, Quebec earning her Nursing degree in 1978. In New York she worked for a short period at the Harlem Hospital. In July 1980, after marrying Dr. Lucien Denis Mocombe, Marie Circée moved to Paris, France. During her stay, she worked at Centre Hospitalier de Gonesse, in the city of Gonesse. After returning to New York, Marie Circée worked at the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit of Maimonides Medical Center in Brooklyn, retiring after 36 years.
Marie Circée was a wife, a mother, and medical professional. She departed this world so much sooner than she should have and leaves behind her husband, Lucien Denis Mocombe, and their children; Mario Denis, Christian Denis, Melissa Circée, Daniel Denis Mocombe, her in-laws Alexa Torres, Patrice Hall Mocombe, Rohith Duvvuri, and her eight grandchildren: Curtis, Manny, Clémentine, Amaya, Isla, Evelina, Mia, and her youngest grandchild Arya, whom she never held in her arms. The family will hold a celebration of life for Marie Circée Bruno Mocombe on Saturday, March 27th, 2021.
From 8:00 AM to 10:00 AM, there will be viewing at Fredrick J. Chapey & Sons Funeral Home where friends and family are invited to pay their respects. This will be followed by a funeral service from 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM at the same location. Additionally, a live video stream of the viewing and funeral service will be available via Zoom (Access link provided below).

Lastly, Marie Circeée’s entombment will be at Pinelawn Memorial Park – Garden Mausoleum beginning at 12:30 PM where guests are also welcome to attend. Out of respect to the family, CDC guidelines will be put in place. These guidelines include but are not limited to:

- Mandatory masks
- Temperature checks at the door
- Social distancing
- Hand sanitizers (provided on site)
- Limited number of guests will be permitted to enter the chapel at a time.

Below are the informational details for viewing, funeral service, and entombment locations as well as the link for the live Zoom video.

We would be grateful if you could pass this message along to anyone who knew Marie Circée and would like to join the family in our celebration of her life.

Dear Dr. Mocombe,

The Florida chapter of the AMHE is sad to learn of the passing of Marie Circeée, your beloved wife. Personally, I would like to express, on behalf of the chapter, my heartfelt condolences to you and to your entire family. It will not be easy to cope with the magnitude of the loss and the devastating impact of her absence in your family. I hope you will find in the more than forty years of commonly sharing and living with her the wonderful memories that the family will need in order to transition toward accepting that she is no longer with you physically.

May she rest in peace! May you find comfort knowing that she is now the guardian Angel watching over the whole family!

Once again, accept the heartfelt condolences of the Florida chapter.

Rony Jean-Mary/Florida Chapter president.