

Review of our 2007-2008 activities

Hope for American and Haitian Youth and Elderly values Education, acknowledges Academic Success

By Hertz Clyde Dézir

When the organization formerly known as Hope for DuVerger held its traditional banquet Saturday, June 30, 2007, the event showcased living examples of educational success among Haitians and Haitian-Americans in Chicago and its suburbs.

In the midst of cheering, encouragement and fellowship, Pastor Franco Valdémair backed by the members of the association took the event to another dimension this year. As a result, five members of the community received a warm honor for their academic accomplishment.

Among the five honorees figured Sabine Casey and Karen Thames; the former earned a doctorate degree in pharmacy, the latter earned a doctorate degree in psychology. Jean Osée Lilite, senior pastor of Grace Haitian Alliance Church in Chicago, and Natacha Dieudonné were also recipients of the group's appreciation. Respectively, one got a master's in theology, with a concentration in biblical exegesis; the other obtained a master's in education – which is her second master's.

Above all, Aliette Marcelin, who had a 25-year teaching career, got a tremendous amount of attention that evening. The number of years she spent teaching was not the only factor that made her an outstanding personality, but the hard work and the impact she's had on her students over the years made them and others look up to her. Out of the 25 years, she spent 22 years teaching English as a Second Language at Evanston Township High School.

Immediately after receiving her plaque, Marcelin expressed some words of appreciation for the recognition given to her on her retirement after a quarter of a century as an educator. "This recognition defines the Haitian value to embrace education and show appreciation to teachers and the role they play..." she said in her allocution.

Marcelin recounted the active role she played in the education of a number of youngsters who've been to her class. The kind of disciplines she applied along with her sense of commitment shaped their character to a certain extent. It didn't matter, what kind of racial or ethnic background those high schoolers came from. Although she did her best to serve all the youth equally, Marcelin couldn't help but develop a stronger sense of attachment to the Haitians or Haitian – Americans pupils.

All the recipients received a plaque handed over to them by Pastor Valdémair and Magalie Oscar, another member of the organization. Pastor Valdémair has reiterated several times that the honorees "exemplify the spirit of Hope for American and Haitian Youth and Elderly (HAHYE) – the new name of the association. As the two were handling out the plaques, Pastor Valdémair wouldn't stop motivating Dieudonné and Pastor Lilite saying "I'm looking forward for the doctorate degree..."

In the meantime, HAHYE has launched that very evening a special publication dubbed *Who's Who in the Haitian Diaspora*. The first issue of that colorful booklet of 64 pages focuses on the educational achievements of more than a dozen other individuals inside and outside of Chicago on top of those who were awarded the plaques during the banquet.

For instance, it highlights the educational pursuit of Fabiola Dalvilus who's currently living in Moscow, Russia for her medical studies. The publication also features a Haitian individual living in Puerto Rico as well as others living in states such as South Carolina and Florida.

On the first edition of that directory, which will feature other personalities every year, Marcelin was proclaimed "the winner." As a result, her picture outstood – size wise – those of the other four candidates' beneath her on the front cover of the brochure.

The feast, which commemorated the sixth anniversary of HAHYE, gave an opportunity to the Haitian community in Chicago to appreciate once again the voice of Léon Dimanche. That veteran of the Haitian music was accompanied by five exceptional musicians from the area including Pharis Mondésir, Jimmy Raymond and Jean Leroy.

Dimanche started his performance with the spiritual tune "*De Canaan*." From that point to the end of the first half of the banquet, the artist kept the audience euphoric through his profound passion that was evident in his deep voice, his gestures and his facial expression. Although he's been on a tour that took him to New York and Boston before making a stop to Chicago, Dimanche showed no sign of tiredness on stage.

The response of the audience proved how much admiration Dimanche fans still have toward him after several decades in that career. Consequently, the public made several standing ovations – an expression of the artist stimulating the fans' musical appetite. Not only did they make several standing ovations, some sang along with him.

As a member of HAHYE, Dimanche has a strong commitment to the organization; his sense of commitment goes beyond providing entertainment through his musical talent. He helps in several other aspects including that of supporting the group financially besides sharing ideas with the organization's president, Pasteur Valdémair with respect to improving the overall operation of HAHYE.

This year marks Dimanche's third performance with the organization. On that occasion, he said, "I have no time to waste; I come here with a purpose. I will never stop coming until the end."

The Haitian Consulate in Chicago called Dimanche "a national treasure." On behalf of the consulate, the Consul General Lesly Condé acknowledged the work of HAHYE both toward Haitians and Haitian – Americans both in the United States and in Haiti. "[HAHYE] has touched and will continue to touch the material and spiritual lives of many here and in Haiti," Condé said in a speech.

During the pause between the first and second half of the dinner, Pastor Valdémair played a video in which students, parents, and faculty members of a school in Haiti called College Prima Achilles thanked the association for its financial support. By watching the video, several people in the audience admits that the work of HAHYE is worthwhile.

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