

SOCIETY OF HAITIAN-AMERICAN
PROFESSIONALS AND ENTREPRENEURS
« SHAPE »

Shaping The Future of Our Community

HAITIAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY AGENDA

Miami, Florida
April 2002

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary

- Chapter I.** *Introduction*
Profile of the Haitian American Community
SHAPE'S Mission and Goals
- Chapter II.** ***Linda Cesar-Noel***
Methodology
Community Agenda Process and Objectives
Community Forums
Focus Groups
- Chapter III.** ***Issues Identified by the Commissions***
- Commission Coordinators***
Mario Appolon
Phillip Brutus, Esq.
Pierre Paul Cadet, M.D.
Gepsie M. Metellus
Jacques Pierre-Louis
Lesly Prudent
Aude Sicard
Maxo Sinal
Jean Marc Villain
- Chapter IV.** ***Commission Recommendations***
- Epilogue.** ***The Incredible Journey of South Florida's Haitian Community***
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the past years, the Haitian American community of Miami-Dade County has emerged as an important immigrant group in South Florida. In light of this historic emergence, it is necessary to identify, assess, and document the needs of this community in ways that are understandable and readily available to all those interested in its progress and evolution. Moreover, it is critical that as a community, we take stock of our strengths and weaknesses in order to chart a course for our continued progress and advancement. In this respect, the Society of Haitian-American Professionals and Entrepreneurs (SHAPE) is proud to have spearheaded the process of creating an "agenda" for and about the growth of the Haitian American community of Miami-Dade County.

Guided by a vision for a stronger and more productive Haitian American community, numerous individuals welcomed and embraced SHAPE's invitation to work on this project. From late August 1998, through December 1999, groups of Haitian academicians, technocrats, and practitioners studied and discussed issues that directly impact the quality of life of Haitian Americans living in Miami-Dade County.

As any emerging ethnic group, the Haitian American community faces internal as well as external problems that must first be assessed and then effectively remedied. The Community Agenda project and this ensuing report propose to contextualize these problems and recommend how to best address them. This Agenda however, does not seek to be the sole and final resource for the social well-being and enfranchisement of the Haitian American community of Miami-Dade County. Nor does it address all the ills of this complex and unique group of people. It will indeed serve as a guide to all policy-makers and to those who implement programs and projects aimed at improving the socio-political and economic conditions in the Haitian American community.

Chapter one of this Agenda presents an overview of the Haitian American community of Miami-Dade County as well as the Mission of SHAPE. The objectives of this project are presented in the following chapter along with the methodology used in the process of creating this Agenda. Chapter three reports the issues identified by the Commissions. Chapter four presents the recommendations of both the Commissions and the public.

Plans are to disseminate this agenda to national, state and local officials such that they can better apprehend the issues, needs and concerns of the Haitian community of Miami-Dade County and such that they respond to the specific recommendations set forth by the community's leadership.

On behalf of the Haitian American community of Miami-Dade County, I extend sincere thanks to the Agenda Commission members, the Commission leaders, the discussion facilitators, and all those who participated in this process.

Much gratitude also goes to the companies that provided financial support to this process. Particularly, to the Office of Commissioner Barbara Carey-Shuler, Allstate Insurance, Bridge Mortgage, Dixie Medical Center, Etiquette Unisex Beauty Salon, Global Projects, Laurenceau Insurance, Mondésir, Estimé-Thompson, & Alexis, P.A., Jose Montana, Ocean World Realty, Partners in Health, Samuel Flowers, Tahitian Noni, Top Insurance, U.S.A. Telephone, and Valparaiso Services, and MJM Capital Realty.

My deepest thanks goes to the directors and members of the Society of Haitian American Professionals and Entrepreneurs for a progressive vision fueled by a deep commitment to a better Miami-Dade Haitian American community. I must also acknowledge the insight and professionalism of The Edge Worldwide, Inc. and particularly, Ms. Linda Cesar-Noel, who partially designed, and coordinated this Agenda process.

Finally, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to my predecessor, Mr. Jean Monestime, for his commitment to qualitative improvement in our community. I must also recognize his dedication to SHAPE, and to the Haitian community. More importantly, I salute the exceptional vision and leadership that ushered this community agenda project for the past two years. I would be remiss if I did not extend special appreciation to our founding members as well as our previous board members, as this year marks the third smooth leadership transition experienced by our organization. In spite of these periodic changes in leadership, the participation and collaboration of previous members has not wavered. I think this augurs well for the organization and ultimately for the Haitian Community of Miami-Dade County.

Gepsie M. Metellus,
Chairperson
Miami, Florida
December 2000

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 PROFILE OF THE HAITIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

Settlement Pattern

At the dawn of the formal Haitian emigration period, the first wave of immigrants who arrived to the Northeastern United States between the 1950's and the early 1960's were the professional and highly skilled people exiled by the Duvalier Regime. The second wave of emigration occurred in the 1970's, consisted mainly of people who were essentially from the middle and lower middle class and who settled primarily in the Northeastern states. During the 1970's the socio-economic conditions in Haïti worsened with widespread corruption, an increasingly repressive state, inadequate basic infrastructure, and a total neglect of the peasant population. These problems were compounded by the inherent social inequalities in Haiti and gave rise to a mass exodus, which began in the 1970's and 1980's and consisted primarily of poor peasants and urban dwellers who became known as the "**Haitian Boat People.**"

Consequently, Haitians fled deteriorating conditions in Haïti and traveled by boat to the Bahamas and Florida in hope of a better life. While some reunited with family members located in other U.S. regions, the great majority of those who had no family members in other U.S. regions remained in Florida. They established themselves for the most part in the South Florida communities of Pompano Beach, Fort Lauderdale, Overtown, and Edison/ Little River¹. When the first reported wave of Haïtian "*boat people*"² arrived on the shores of Miami in 1973, a fairly substantial number of Haitians resided in many "middle-class" neighborhoods throughout Miami-Dade County.

Today, the "Boat People" phenomenon persists because the socio-economic conditions that gave rise to it also persist. In fact, today, greater numbers of Haitians of all social origins are compelled to leave Haiti to seek a safe haven in the United States and elsewhere.

Once inhabited by middle-class whites, the City of Miami became the highest point of concentration of Haïtian refugees in South Florida throughout the 1970s

¹ Claude Charles, "History of Little Haïti", interview by Linda César, 31 June, 1994. *Housing in Little Haïti: A Neighborhood Revitalization Perspective*. A thesis paper submitted to Florida Atlantic University's College of Urban & Public Affairs, August, 1994. Mr. Charles is a Haïtian Anthropologist, and an active and respected community pioneer.

² "**Boat People**" is a term used generally to identify the Cuban and Haïtian refugees who arrived on Florida shores in poorly manufactured and unsafe boats.

and the 1980s. By late 1970s, there was a solid presence of Haitians in the Edison / Little River area. Because massive group of Haitian refugees settled throughout this enclave³, "Little Haiti" originated.

Simultaneously to the influx of Haitian refugees directly from the island nation and the Bahamas, there was a continuous wave of Haitian migration from the Northeastern United States and Canada. The latter group consisted of first generation immigrants who had worked arduously for many years, were fleeing the cold weather and were seeking an alternative similar to Haiti's tropical weather and lifestyle. These groups established themselves in such neighborhoods as Kendall, Miami Shores, North Miami, El Portal, and Miami Gardens. As the financial conditions of Haitians who established themselves in Little Haiti improved, they also moved up to the north of Miami-Dade County .

Today the estimated 200,000⁴ Haitians and Haitian Americans who inhabit the cities of North Miami, Miami Shores, El Portal, Opa Locka, North Miami Beach, Homestead, Florida City, and various sections of Unincorporated Dade County comprise both, Haitian "*boat people*" and Haitians who relocated from Northeastern states.

Over the years, the Haitian American community of Miami-Dade County has increasingly affirmed its position as a growing, thriving, and permanent element of Miami-Dade County's mosaic. This group of recent refugees, turned immigrants, turned American citizens, has fought many battles and has endured many controversies. Because it is socio-economically complex and fragmented, the Haitian American community of Miami-Dade remains a challenge to policy makers, public administrators, and a curiosity to academicians and technocrats. The Commissions' deliberations presented in Chapter three (3) will underscore the complexities inherent in Miami-Dade County's Haitian-American community.

³ Claude Charles, History of Little Haiti.

⁴ While there is no official U.S. Census data on the total number of Haitians living in Miami-Dade County, several scholars, and technocrats have estimated the Haitian American populace of the county to be over 200,000 strong few years ago. See Greg Fields, "High Hopes & Hard Times in Little Haiti" Miami Herald (Miami, 15 February 1993), 24BM.

1.2. SHAPE's MISSION

The *Society of Haitian American Professionals and Entrepreneurs (SHAPE)* is a non-profit, Miami-based organization established in 1996. SHAPE's primary purpose is to harness economic, political and social capital within Miami-Dade's Haitian-American Community. As such, SHAPE will provide leadership for the advancement of the social, economic, civic, political, and cultural vitality of the Haitian community. It will also serve as a vehicle to enhance the Haitian Community's image and to catapult professionals and entrepreneurs into the economic and political mainstream.

SHAPE's Primary Goals are:

- ◆ To promote and encourage educational excellence, personal growth and achievement among Haitian-Americans and to prepare Haitian-American youth for future leadership roles.
- ◆ To bring together Haitian-American professionals at the local, state, national and international levels for the purpose of marshaling our assets and mobilizing our resources
- ◆ To create partnerships and build coalitions with local, state, national and international organizations whose goals are consistent with our organizational goals.
- ◆ To act as a watchdog group on policies and initiatives that may in anyway infringe upon the rights of Haitian-Americans and to spearhead dialogue and action on critical community issues
- ◆ To identify and disseminate information regarding potential business opportunities of interest to Haitian community entrepreneurs. To promote Haitian-American entrepreneurs and to foster support for their business establishments
- ◆ To advocate for the Haitian Community's social, economic and political well-being and to identify, recruit and groom Haitian-Americans for public office.

Chapter 2. Methodology

In a politically, socially and economically fragmented community such as the Haitian American community of Miami Dade County, the method by which a "community agenda" is developed requires a process of inclusion, collaboration and agreement from various sectors of that community. SHAPE undertook a wide range of activities that would ensure the participation of a group of individuals truly representative of all segments of the Haitian American community of Miami-Dade.

In this Chapter we report those activities in an exhaustive manner. The "Community Forums" were the skeleton of the planning process. In these forums, many factors and issues crucial to the development of a "true" community agenda were identified and addressed. It was imperative to create a framework for the cooperative and collaborative participation of everyone with expertise and/or interest in particular areas that impact upon the quality of life in the community. Hence, the creation of "Commissions". The "focus groups" at the conference afforded the general public the opportunity to comment on the development of the agenda. The year 2000 Leadership Conference provided an opportunity for adjusting and fine-tuning this document.

2.1 COMMUNITY FORUMS

In early September 1998, SHAPE extended an open invitation to all known Haitian American organizations in Miami-Dade county as well as active and prominent members of the community. On September 27th, 1998, over 35 individuals, representatives of multiple organizations participated in the first of two community forums. Table 1 lists all organizations that were represented in those forums.

To ensure a comprehensive review of the major issues affecting all segments of the Haitian American population of Miami-Dade county, participants of the first forum voted to create "Commissions". The Commissions would focus on specific areas / issues. Table 2 lists the Commission members⁵ and their affiliations.

⁵ Not all "Commissions' members were present at the first forum. While most of them were, many were nominated by forum participants who are familiar with their expertise and/or interest on particular issues.

Table 1 - Haitian American Organizations Represented in the Forums

	ORGANIZATIONS	MISSION / ACTIVITIES	MEMBERSHIP
1	Haitian-American Center for Economic and Public Affairs (HACEPA)	Community Development	20+
2	Haitian Lawyers Association (HLA)	Legal Advocacy	25+
3	Haitian American Democratic Club of Broward (HADCB)	Political Activism	N/A
4	Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS)	Education	N/A
5	Haitian American Grassroots Coalition (HAGC)	Community Activism	30+
6	Haitians American Community Association of Dade (HACAD)	Social Service	N/A
7	Women's Alliance of Dade and Broward (WADB)	Women's Rights	25+
8	Haitian American Democratic Women's Club (HADWC)	Political Activism	45
9	Haitian American Engineers & Scientists (HAES)	Professional	50+
10	Haitian American Foundation, Inc. (HAFI)	Social Service	N/A
11	Haitian American Political Caucus (HAPC)	Political Activism	35
12	Haitian American Political Action Committee (HAPAC)	Political	50+
13	Haitian American Youth of Tomorrow (HAYOT)	Youth Advocacy	100+
14	Operation Green Leaves (OGL)	Environmental	200+
15	Society for Haitian Advancement Recognition & Education (S.H.A.R.E.)	Social Service	N/A
16	Society of Haitian American Professionals & Entrepreneurs (SHAPE)	Professional	50+
17	Sport Passion	Sports Promotion	135+
18	The Credit is Due	Economic Development	30+
19	Veye Yo	Political / Community Activism	100+
20	Youth Education Through Soccer (YES)	Youth Development	60+
21	Sosyete Koukouy (SK)	Art and Culture	30+
22	Haitian American Democratic Club of Greater Miami (HADCGM)	Political Activism	N/A
23	Haitian Women of Miami (FANM)	Women's Advocacy	N/A

Table 2 - Commission Members and their Affiliation(s)

Last Name	First Name	Commission	Affiliation
Alexis	Gabrielle, Esq.	Political Activism	Haitian Lawyers Association
Altime	Eddy	Children, Elderly and Families (CEF)	Concerned Citizen
Alvarez	Emmanuel	Sports & Recreation	Sport Passion
Appolon	Mario	Sports & Recreation	YES
Bastien	Marleine	Children, Elderly and Families (CEF)	Haitian Women of Miami (FANM)
Bell	Marie Florence	Government Affairs and Political Action (GAPA)	SHAPE
Brutus	Phillip J., Esq.	GAPA and Legal Services	HAPC
Cadet	Pierre-Paul	Health, Education & Social Services (HES)	AMHE
Césaire	Johnny	Media & Public Affairs	Radyo Pèp
César-Noël	Linda	Community & Economic Development (C&ED)	OGL
Cherubin	Emmanuel	Media & Public Affairs	Haïti Antenne Plus
Colin	Jessie	Health, Education & Social Services (HES)	HANA
Cyriaque	Clarel, Esq.	Legal Services	HAPC
Déziré	Janjan	Arts and Culture	(SK)
Despinosse	Jacques	Media and Public Affairs	Haitian American Democratic Club
Dorcely	Estomène	Education	HAPC/HADWC
Estimé-Thompson	Marie	Legal Services	HLA
Faustin	Carline	Education	M-DCPS
Francois	Ralph, Esq.	Legal Services	HLA
French	Lilianne	Health, Education and Social Services (HES)	HANA
Gaudin	Lavarice	Political Activism	Veye Yo
Hermantin	Léonie	Community & Economic Development (C&ED)	HAFI
Jacques	Lesly	Media & Public Affairs	Radio Haiti Amérique Internationale
Jean – Baptiste	Zenono	Sports & Recreation	Sport Passion
Jean Tenor	Tony	GAPA	Veye Yo

Joseph	Icours	C&ED	HAPC
Juste	Viter	Arts and Culture	Concerned Citizen
Labossière	Jocelyne	Education	M-DCPS
Léger	Nancy	Arts and Culture	SK
Louissaint	Claude	Children Elderly and Families	Haitian American Democratic Club of Broward
Mapou	Jan	Arts and Culture	SK
Marzouka	Valérie	CEF	HAFI
Metellus	Gepsie	Government Affairs/ Political Action (GAPA)	SHAPE
Mirville	Ernest	Arts and Culture	SK
Mondésir	Evenette, Esq.		Haitian Lawyers Association (HLA)
Monestime	Régine	Political Activism	Grassroots Coalition
Monestime	Jean		SHAPE
Paul	Carline	Political Activism Children, Elderly and Families	HAYOT
Phanord	Herntz	Media & Public Affairs	HAP
Phillipeaux	Tamara	Media & Public Affairs	Island Magazine TV
Pierre	Larry	Children, Elderly and Families	Center for Haitian Studies
Pierre	Wilfrid	GAPA	HAPC
Pierre-Louis	Jacques	Arts and Culture	SHAPE
Prudent	Lesly	Education	M-DCPS
Renaud	Yves	Education	Haiti On Line
Roberson	Yolly	Children, Elderly & Families and Legal Services	HADWC
Semelfort	Bertin	Sports & Recreation	Haiti Antenne Plus
Séraphin	Bernard	C&ED	Concerned Citizen
Sicard	Aude	Children, Elderly and Families (CEF)	Women's Alliance of Dade and Broward
Sinal	Maxo	Media & Public Affairs	SHAPE
Timmer	Alix	Sports & Recreation	Sport Passion
Villain	Marc	Community & Economic Development (C&ED)	Credit is Due
Voltaire	Nelson	Media & Public Affairs	Radyo Piman Bouk
Wainwright	Kiki	Arts and Culture	SK

The Commissions were assigned the central task of identifying issues and concerns related to their subject matter (i.e. immigration advocacy, economic development etc.) This assignment was to be completed by November 15th, 1998, and presented at the second forum, scheduled for that day. To facilitate and guide the Commissions in the completion of that task, a "Coordinator" was appointed for each Commission during the first forum. (Appendix C) Table 3 lists the Commission Coordinators and their affiliation.

Table 3- Commission Coordinators and their Affiliation(s)

COMMISSIONS	COORDINATORS	AFFILIATION
Arts & Culture	Jacques Pierre-Louis	SHAPE
Children, Elders, & Family Services	Aude Sicard	Women Alliance of Dade and Broward/SHAPE
Community & Economic Development	Marc Villain	The Credit is Due SHAPE
Education	Lesly Prudent	HAPC
Government Affairs and Political Action	Gepsie Metellus	SHAPE
Health Services	Pierre Paul Cadet	AMHE
Immigration Advocacy	Aude Sicard	Grassroots Coalition SHAPE
Legal Services	Phillip J. Brutus	HAPC
Media & Public Affairs	Maxo Sinal	SHAPE
Sports & Recreation	Mario Appolon	YES

Second Community Forum -The second Community Forum brought new participants into the process. At that meeting, each Commission Coordinator made a formal presentation on the issues identified by the Commission along with their recommendations. Forum participants commented, debated and added to individual Commission's reports.

Also at that meeting, Frantz Jean-Louis, a representative of the U.S. Census Bureau made a presentation on Census 2000. Mr. Jean-Louis stressed the importance for the Haitian American community of Miami-Dade County to understand and actively participate in the process.⁶

⁶ Mr. Jean-Louis was a community partnership specialist for the U.S. Census.

2.2 FOCUS GROUPS

On Sunday, December 13th, 1999, SHAPE organized a one-day conference that opened the process of developing the Agenda to the general public. Over 350 individuals from the Haitian community of both Broward and Dade Counties⁷ received an invitation to that conference. Over 120 individuals attended the conference.

The topics studied by the Commissions constituted the subjects for "Focus Groups" work at the conference. The following is a detailed strategy on how those focus groups proceeded.

1. A Facilitator explained the activities preceding the conference and the objectives of the focus group
2. Speakers / Coordinators presented and framed the issue(s)
3. Audience commented, debated, and added to the issues
4. Speakers / Coordinators presented recommendations
5. Audience commented, debated, and added to those recommendations

The strategies and activities described in this Chapter were aimed at ensuring diversity and plurality of opinions, as well as broad-based representation to the process of adopting an agenda for the Haitian American community of Miami Dade County. Chapter three discusses the issues identified throughout this process.

2.3 FEEDBACK PERIODS

On Sunday, December 17, 2000, during the annual leadership conference, additional input was provided by the conferees. A draft agenda was distributed to all participants for further reaction, feedback and recommendations. Shortly thereafter a copy was mailed to all organizational representatives and/or service providers who serve the Haitian-American community, with a specific request to forward all comments/suggestions, in writing, by a date certain.

⁷ About 13% of individuals invited live in Broward County. Because so many of individuals who live in Broward are involved at various levels with the Haitian American community of Miami Dade county, their input and participation was important to make this process as inclusive as possible. It is also important to note that some of the Commissions participants also live in Broward County.

Chapter 3. Issues Identified

3.1 ARTS & CULTURE

This Committee examined the "state of the arts" in the Haitian Community with respect to the value assigned to artistic and cultural productions. It also discussed the barriers to full respect, appreciation, promotion and development of Haitian artists in the Miami-Dade County Area.

Issue One - Lack of mainstream media coverage of cultural events taking place in the Haitian community. In addition, the cost of media coverage and advertising of events is disproportionately exorbitant within the Haitian community.

Issue Two - There is no "comprehensive" cultural center and repository for artistic development and exposure in the community. Furthermore, there are no monuments and museum to showcase cultural arts and talent within the community, or to mark the community's presence and contributions.

Issue Three - Enforcement of Copyright laws for artistic production.

3.2 EDUCATION, CHILDREN, FAMILIES, SOCIAL SERVICES AND THE ELDERLY

This committee examined the factors that result in poor academic performance among some children of Haitian origin, and particularly in schools located in predominantly poor neighborhoods where there are large numbers of Haitians.

Issue One - There is a deficiency of support services to ensure proper performance and achievement for a large number of Haitian American children.

Issue Two - The lack of parental education and involvement in the educational system and process.

Issue Three - The lack of financial assistance and guidance to facilitate and support the transition from high school to higher education.

Issue Four - The majority of schools that have high Haitian American student populations show high levels of under achievement.

Issue Five - The absence of programs to meet the needs of our growing elderly population.

Issue Six - The need for interagency collaboration and coordination of services among social service providers in the Haitian community.

Issue Seven - The need to gather data on the community to better identify problems, trends as well solutions.

3.3. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

This committee addressed the issues & challenges related to home ownership and the state of businesses in Miami-Dade County's Haitian-American community. These issues were analyzed by examining the relationships between the private sector, the non-profit sector, and local government agencies.

Issue One - The state of businesses in the community is increasingly alarming. Many of our small and micro businesses suffer from a chronic lack of good marketing and management practices and under-capitalization. The intervention of business assistance services in the form of management, training, and technical assistance can make a significant impact on the survivability of small business operating in the Haitian community.

Issue Two - There is a need to inventory non-profit service providers that receive taxpayer dollars to provide social service and housing programs in the census tracts with heavy concentrations of Haitian-Americans. Insufficient financial resources going to non-profit organizations in the Haitian community

Issue Three - Private funds are routinely leveraged in public projects. Private sector participation in the development process is not encouraged enough to increase the circulation of the dollar in the Haitian-American community. This can create much needed employment and recycle dollars inside the community.

3.4 GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS / POLITICAL ACTION

This committee sought to identify the social infrastructure, the strengths, as well as the effective tools and strategies utilized by other immigrant groups who have gained social, economic and political prominence in their respective communities.

Issue One - There is no significant representation from the Haitian American community in local (municipal and school board), state and national elected offices and in administrative positions in both, the public and private sectors.

Issue Two - The Haitian community is overwhelmingly unfamiliarity with the particulars of politics at the local, state, and national levels (i.e. taxation, funding,

municipal boundaries, services and responsibilities of the three levels of government.

Issue Three – Low number of Haitian Americans citizens who are registered voters.

Issue Four - There is need to educate the general population on the importance of their active participation in the process by knowing the “who”, “what” and “how” of the political and electoral process.

Issue Five - The Haitian American community is perceived as weak, divided, unfocussed, and lacks a blueprint for its development. Also, individual views and perception on leadership and its responsibilities within the community create a problem for advancement in the political arena.

Issue Six - There is no effective lobbying in favor of issues that can improve the quality of life within the community.

Issue Seven - There are inter-group and inter-ethnic conflicts between Haitian Americans and African-Americans and other Caribbean groups.

3.5 IMMIGRATION ADVOCACY

This committee analyzed the political factors that influence American Immigration Policy. It further sought to outline the strategic actions and alliances in which the community must engage in order to attain equal justice for our fellow Haitians.

Issue One - There are no Haitian American lawyers in policy-making positions with regards to immigrant advocacy in both, governmental and non-profit sectors.

Issue Two - There are no dedicated resources to support lobbying activities on behalf of Haitian refugees.

Issue Three – The coordination of advocacy activities on behalf of Haitian refugees by collaborating with various entities who often times have differing missions and objectives.

3.6 LEGAL SERVICES

This committee assessed the quality and quantity of legal service providers of Haitian origin who primarily serve the Haitian Community.

Issue One - There is a lack of interaction between Haitian-American legal practitioners and the mainstream legal community.

Issue Two – There is a need to enforce proper education for legal practitioners within the Community and control unscrupulous client billing practices.

Issue Three - The lack of financial resources prevalent in the community poses a problem at both the continuing education level and the services level.

3.7 MEDIA & PUBLIC RELATIONS

This committee focused on the necessity to invest in or acquire multiple mediums of communication to better serve the Haitian community.

Issue One - Haitian American broadcasters spend excessive dollars to purchase airtime. That amount of money is not re-circulated in the Haitian American community.

Issue Two - There is need to “professionalize” broadcasting in the Haitian American community.

Issue Three - There is a need for the Haitian media to expand from radio to consolidated print and televised networks.

3.8 SPORTS & RECREATION

This committee discussed the absence of a sports infrastructure in the Haitian community, the critical need for recreational activities for Haitian youth as well as the need to aggressively create various sports programs in our community.

Issue One - There is a need to integrate the younger generation in sports activities and groom them for professional levels. (i.e. tennis, soccer, basketball etc.)

Issue Two - There is a lack of resources to support sporting activities at all levels in the community. These resources range from financial ones to available facilities.

Issue Three - Sports activities are not integrated. There needs to be a liaison between community sports talents and mainstream sport organizations for purposes of outreach and marketing initiatives.

Chapter 4. Recommendations

I. EDUCATION, CHILDREN, FAMILIES, SOCIAL SERVICES, & THE ELDERLY

Issue One - There is a deficiency of support services to ensure proper performance and achievement for a large number of Haitian American children. The majority of schools that have high Haitian American student population show high level of under achievement.

Recommendation (s)

1. Develop Comprehensive After-School Programs to be delivered at community-based organizations and agencies.
2. Implement a Role Model Program integrating members of professional organizations and interested citizens.
3. Integrate Motivational Speakers in School & After School Programs

Issue Two - The lack of parental education and involvement in the educational system and process.

Recommendation (s)

1. Develop an *intense* community outreach program to be aired on Creole radio and television programs to educate parents on the school system and encourage their participation in school activities particularly the Parents Teachers Association (PTA).
2. Develop an active *Cultural Awareness Program* for educators serving Haitian students.

Issue Three - The lack of financial assistance and guidance to facilitate and support the transition from high school to higher education.

Recommendation(s)

1. Encourage professional organizations to partner with the Haitian American Educators of Dade to plan special fundraising drives for the sole purpose of providing scholarships to deserving Haitian American students
2. Promote Job training and skills development to respond to the Welfare Reform Law's new demands

3. Promote Health education to curb the spread of contagious diseases
4. Create specific programs to respond to the steady increase of Juvenile delinquents & teenage pregnancies

II. GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS / POLITICAL ACTION

Issue One - *There is no significant representation from Haitian Americans in local (municipal and school board), state and national elected offices as well as in administrative positions in both, the public and private sectors.*

Recommendation(s)

1. Create Political Action Committees to identify, recruit, and groom Haitian-Americans for public office; to spearhead public dialogue on the critical issues we face; to exert pressure on key decision-makers; and to advocate on behalf of the Haitian-American community.
2. Promote participation in mainstream activities in order to establish and reaffirm a Haitian-American presence, and to promote the "community's agenda".

Issue Two - *The community is overwhelmingly unfamiliar with the particulars of politics at the local, state, and national levels (i.e. taxation, funding, municipal boundaries, services and responsibilities of the three levels of government).*

Recommendation(s)

1. Develop political awareness programs for both Creole radio and television that educate the general community on the local, state, and federal political system.

Issue Three - *Low number of Haitian American citizens who are registered voters.*

Recommendation(s)

1. Promote the acquisition of American citizenship and explain its benefits for the Haitian-American community as well as for Haiti.
2. Encourage existing and other grassroots and community organizations to pursue intense voters registration drives.
3. Increase outreach efforts targeting the Haitian-American youth and their respective political action groups.

Issue Four – *There is a need to educate the general population on the importance of actively participating in the process by knowing the “who”, “what” and “how” of the political and electorate process.*

Recommendation(s)

1. Encourage Haitian broadcasters to devote some time for political/civic education/ participation.
2. Encourage increased visibility and participation of Haitian-Americans in local (county and municipal) public hearings and commission/council meetings.

Issue Five - *The Haitian American community is perceived as weak, divided, unfocused, and lacks a blueprint for its development. Also, individual views and perceptions of leadership and its responsibilities within the community create a problem for advancement in the political arena.*

Recommendation(s)

1. Strengthen existing community organizations by supporting their activities, and by providing constructive criticism to encourage their growth and expansion.
2. Create partnership with and build coalitions with community-based organizations on all pertinent community issues and especially with those involved in citizenship drives.
3. Increase general community involvement with both the democratic and the republican parties.
4. Link or network with other Haitian-American individuals and organizations throughout the United States.

Issue Six - *There is no effective lobbying in support of issues that can improve the quality of life within the community.*

Recommendation(s)

1. Establish a lobbying group made up of a cross-section of resourceful, articulate, Haitian-Americans to advocate for and champion the “issues of the day”.
2. Increase general community involvement with both the democratic and the republican parties.

3. Develop a collaborative community-wide effort to ensure the maximum participation of the community in Census 2000 and other critical programs.

Issue Seven - There are inter-group and inter-ethnic conflicts between Haitian Americans and African-Americans and other Caribbean groups.

Recommendation(s)

1. Establish a general community organization for the purpose of harnessing and coordinating inter-group relations between Haitian Americans and other ethnic groups in this region, state, and throughout and throughout the United States.

III. LEGAL SERVICES

Issue One - There is a lack of interaction and activities between Haitian American legal practitioners and the mainstream legal community.

Recommendation(s)

1. Develop a working partnership between Haitian Lawyers Association and local Bar Associations to assist in the delivery of legal services on a Pro Bono basis.

Request that any and all legal education documents published by any entity in the State be translated to Creole.

Issue Two - There is a need to enforce proper education for legal practitioners within the Community and control unscrupulous charges to clients.

Recommendation(s)

1. Discourage unlicensed practice of law by either inexperienced or unlicensed individuals who, inadvertently, hold themselves out as being able provide legal services normally dispensed by licensed attorneys.

Issue Three - The lack of financial resources that is prevalent in the community poses a problem at both the continuing education level and the services level.

Recommendation(s)

1. The Haitian American Lawyers Association should develop partnerships with local colleges and law schools to seek and encourage full scholarships for young Haitians who are otherwise qualified but lack the financial support to finance a legal education.

2. Encourage the creation or specialization of community agencies with the singular mission of providing quality low cost legal services.
3. Promote the concept of legal insurance so as to make legal services available to all and affordable for some.

IV. MEDIA & PUBLIC RELATIONS

Issue One - Haitian American broadcasters spend excessive dollars to purchase airtime. That amount of money is not re-circulated in the Haitian American community.

Recommendation(s)

1. Advocate for a Haitian-American owned and operated radio stations on regular airwaves.

Issue Two - There is a need to "professionalize" broadcasting in the Haitian American community.

Recommendation(s)

1. Develop an active Haitian American Media Association that incorporates the talents of all Haitian American media professionals and practitioners.

Issue Three - There is a need for the Haitian media to expand from radio to consolidated print and televised networks.

Recommendation(s)

1. Create a newspaper/magazine capable of selling the community's agenda to the mainstream and to educate the Haitian Americans on community wide, regional, national, and international issues.

V. COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Issue One - The state of businesses in the community is increasingly alarming. Many of our small and micro businesses suffer from a chronic lack of good marketing and management practices and under-capitalization. The intervention of business assistance services in the form of management, training, and technical assistance can make a significant impact on the survivability of small business operating in the Haitian community.

Recommendation(s)

1. Develop a Community Development Corporation to seek increased technical assistance for businesses and non-profit organizations within the community.
2. Encourage small businesses to better organize themselves to benefit their bottom line

Issue Two – *There is a need to inventory non-profit service providers that receive taxpayer dollars to provide social service and housing programs in the census tracks with heavy concentrations of Haitian-Americans. Insufficient financial resources are going to non-profit organizations in the Haitian community.*

Recommendation(s)

1. Advocate to government and philanthropic organizations for a comprehensive study of the Haitian American community.
2. Develop a comprehensive study of the non-profit service providers.
3. Inventory all available public funding programs.
4. Develop stronger relations amongst the private, non-profit, and local government entities.
5. Develop a technical assistance system that will assist non-profit entities within the community to proactively seek public and private funds.
6. Monitor funding decisions to channel funds to viable community projects.
7. Government and philanthropic entities should encourage accountable and measurable delivery of service.

Issue Three - *Private funds are routinely leveraged in public projects. Private sector participation in the development process is not encouraged enough to increase the circulation of the dollar in the Haitian-American community to create much needed employment and recycle dollars inside the community.*

Recommendation(s)

1. Chambers of Commerce, government entities, and financial institutions should encourage the increased participation of the private sector in the development process of the community.

2. Create a Private Sector Capitalization of a Pool of Investment Funds in order to evaluate and invest in various public/private partnerships such as housing development projects, shopping centers, and other businesses.
3. Encourage the participation of private businesses in government contracting.
4. Chambers of Commerce and private economic development entities should serve as advocates for increased public funding of community development projects.
5. All entities concerned should encourage joint ventures between the private and non-profit sectors in community and economic development projects whenever possible.

VI. ARTS & CULTURE

***Issue One** - The lack of mainstream media coverage of cultural events taking place in the community. The cost of media coverage and advertising for events is disproportionately exorbitant within the Haitian community.*

Recommendation(s)

1. Seek more cooperation from the mainstream media such as The Miami Herald, The New Times and The Miami Times to promote and cover Haitian cultural activities and Haitian artists.

***Issue Two**- There is no "comprehensive" cultural center and repository for artistic development and exposure in the community. There are no monuments or museum to showcase cultural arts and talent within the community.*

Recommendation(s)

1. Create a Haitian Arts Attraction Center
2. Seek the establishment of an Artistic Studio to exhibit artists' works, house various types of artists.
3. Encourage movie theatres to show popular movies/documentaries featuring Haitian and African cultures.
4. Establish a permanent Cultural Committee composed of representatives from the cultural affairs officials and artists to oversee the development of arts & culture within the community.

Issue Three - Enforcement of Copyright laws for artistic production within the community is needed.

Recommendation(s)

1. This issue is to be undertaken by the Cultural Committee proposed in the previous recommendation.

VII. SPORTS AND RECREATION

Issue One - There is a need to integrate the younger generation in sports activities and groom them for professional levels. (i.e. tennis, soccer, basketball etc.)

Recommendation(s)

1. Establish a Sports Committee to develop a community Sports & Recreation Vision, and a Needs Analysis for the community. Integrate multiple generations, particularly the youth, in formulating that vision.
2. There is a need to secure more resources and facilities for sports promotion and development

Issue Two - The lack of resources to support sporting activities at all levels in the community. These resources range from financial ones to available facilities.

Recommendation(s)

1. The Community Sport Committee is to network and collaborate with sporting entities at both the private and public levels to secure financial resources and infrastructure for sports promotion and development, particularly for the youth.
2. Integrate Haitian sports talents into the mainstream sports network (High school, college, and professional)

Issue Three - Sports activities are not integrated. There needs to be a liaison between community sports talents and the mainstream of individual sports.

Recommendation(s)

1. Promote individual sports amongst the youth.
2. Encourage the development of particular sporting talents through establishment of special community tournaments and participation in mainstream tournaments and championships.

VIII. IMMIGRATION ADVOCACY

Issue One - There are no Haitian American lawyers in policymaking positions with regards to immigrant advocacy in both, governmental and non-profit sectors.

Recommendation(s)

1. Haitian American attorneys must obtain key positions in public and private non-profit organizations as well as government agencies.
2. The Haitian American Grassroots Coalition should be proactively involved in the drafting of regulations that deal with immigrants especially those addressing the concerns of Haitian immigrants.

Issue Two - There are no dedicated financial resources to support lobbying activities on behalf of Haitian refugees.

Recommendation(s)

1. A special Immigrant Advocacy Fund should be created to garnish money to help in the advocacy of special immigrant rights and justice.
2. Haitian Americans should be encouraged to contribute to the Fund to support immigrant advocacy.

Issue Three - The coordination of advocacy activities on behalf of Haitian refugees is coordinated through various entities who often times have differing missions and objectives.

Recommendation(s)

1. Create a legal advocacy organization for Haitian immigrants whose sole purpose is to champion the issues of Haitian immigrants.
2. Haitian Grassroots organizations must have a permanent existence and should have clear goals and objectives.

EPILOGUE

The Incredible Journey of South Florida's Haitian Community

The Haitian community of South Florida has successfully established itself as a socio-economically vibrant community capable of contributing tremendously to the enrichment of this County's multicultural character. Haitians have come a long way; from refugees, to legal immigrants, to active and important constituency within Miami-Dade County. In fact, the Haitian community that originally settled in Miami's Little Haiti has progressed at such a significant rate that Little Haiti has become a transitional place where Haitians of lesser means and those who have recently arrived settle temporarily until they become economically self-sufficient.

In spite of the current transitional nature of Little Haiti, it continues to be of great social and cultural significance to the Haitian Diaspora because it is the only geographical area in the history of Haitian immigration primarily inhabited by Haitians, bustling with Haitian owned and operated businesses, where the aroma of Creole cooking, the rhythm of Haitian compas, and the expressive tone of Haitian Creole greet residents and visitors alike. In addition, the name of a cultural icon graces a major thoroughfare in the heart of Little Haiti. North East Second Avenue is now known as "*Avenue Felix Morisseau Leroy*" which leads directly to Toussaint Louverture Elementary School. In a very brief period, Haitians have changed the character of Little Haiti and have begun to revitalize the area. Little Haiti has indeed become famous; it has earned a national and international reputation. The direction and future of the area will depend upon the political and economic clout of South Florida's Haitian Community.

Yes, Haitians have come a long way since the early 1970's when the community waged major battles against the Immigration and Naturalization Service which led us to the United States Supreme Court. Since 1980, there has been a number of significant rulings concerning Haitian refugees as well as significant legislative measures passed to resolve their uncertain legal status. In many instances, members of the Haitian-American community led the charge to ensure these legislative victories. The most recent victory was the Haitian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act of 1998 (HRIFA), championed by the Haitian American Grassroots Coalition. This past decade, six Haitian-Americans were elected in two separate cities: Phillipe Derose, (the first Haitian-American elected to public office in the State of Florida) and subsequently Islande Salomon and Laura Charlemagne-Vancol in the Village Council of El Portal; Joe Celestin, the First Haitian-American Mayor of North Miami, Jacques Despinosse and Ossman Desir, in the City Council of North Miami. In November 2000, Haitian-Americans elected their first representative to the State of Florida Legislature, Phillip J. Brutus. In October 2001, the governor of Florida appointed Fred Seraphin to the

County Bench, making him the first Haitian-American County Court Judge. This millennium bodes well for Haitian-Americans.

As a community we are firmly on the path to the mainstream via our civic and political participation, our entrepreneurial undertakings as well as our self-help initiatives. Today, the fact that public office seekers are courting the Haitian vote further indicates this mainstreaming process. However, as a community we have much more to overcome: There exist a number of socio-economic and political problems affecting the quality of life of a great number of Haitians. These problems constitute the focus of this community agenda process. For, these issues are critical to our successful integration into the American social, economic, political and cultural mainstream. SHAPE, together with all other community organizations, will ensure that these issues receive the proper attention and response. Future generations of Americans of Haitian descent will lead the charge in setting a new course for their communities.

Society of Haitian American Professionals and Entrepreneurs
"Shaping the Future of our Community"

Founding Members

Smith Joseph, Pharm.D., M.D.
Jean Monestime
Claire Nelson
Jacques Pierre-Louis
Patricia Sainvil
Maxo Sinal

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