



# Association of Haitian Women in Boston

## Our Mission

AFAB's mission is to empower Haitian women by helping them develop individual and collective capacity to improve their social, economic and political status and thus effect positive change in their lives and the lives of their families.

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Dear Friends and Colleagues,

First, I want to remind you of our upcoming annual fundraiser. This year, instead of a dinner, we're switching things up to present a concert with the spectacular internationally-known Haitian singer Emeline Michel. We chose the newly-renovated historic Strand Theatre as the site, and the evening promises to be wonderful.

"An Evening with Emeline Michel" will take place at Boston's historic Strand Theatre on Sunday, October 25<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm. Tickets, \$30 for adults, and \$20 for children, are available by calling 617.287.0096. We look forward to seeing you there!

2009 has been a good year for AFAB! We received the Boston Neighborhood Fellows Award and the Robert H. Quinn Award for Outstanding Community Leadership. The awards acknowledge our ground-breaking work on domestic violence within the Haitian community.

Domestic violence is not a personal or family matter; it's an offense that involves everyone. As you know October is Domestic Violence Prevention Month. Because of this spotlight, we invite you to read the Haitian Roundtable on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Declaration which we're preprinting in this newsletter, and to pledge to support the eradication of domestic violence.

Despite the recent and harsh economic times, we continue to empower our women and families with new programming. The new initiatives include a new immigrant support group, organizing work on human services and the tutoring of high school students with the help of the Center for Information, Documentation and Research on Haiti and the Haitian-American Educators of Massachusetts.

We thank everyone who has supported our work over the years and want to remind you that we continue to count on your support.

Together, we can make a difference.

—Carline Desire, Executive Director

## Haitian Roundtable on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Clergy Breakfast

On Saturday, June 13<sup>th</sup> 2009, the Haitian Roundtable held its 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Clergy Breakfast at the Codman Square Great Hall. In attendance were pastors and preachers from Boston and the greater Boston area, as well as representatives of Massachusetts Health and Community Services (MCHS), the Haitian American Public Health Initiative (HAPHI), the Boston Area Rape Crisis Center (BARCC), and the Department of Children and Families (DCF). The focus of the breakfast and the panel discussion was how to openly discuss domestic violence issues, and explore how clergy members could be more involved and supportive of domestic violence victims within their congregations.

Olivia Apollon, MSW, LICSW spoke of the connection between domestic violence and mental health issues. She acknowledged that though the physical effects of abuse are the most visible, often "emotional wounds are not treated." Ms. Apollon mentioned the need for more concern for the mental health of individuals in the community. Mental health she said "is defined as 'how we think, feel and act as we cope with life.' It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others and make choices." In addition, she outlined how mental disorders, such as post-traumatic-stress disorder, depression, and anxiety can interfere with an individual's ability to deal with daily life—limiting her or his ability to function in society and relate to others. The relationship between domestic violence and mental health problems is a pressing public health issue.

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### *Domestic Violence Forum Impressions*

*The Haitian Roundtable on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault's annual domestic violence forum provided an important opportunity to learn about and discuss the issues of domestic violence and mental health in the Haitian community. The panel discussions and the workshops sparked discussion and questions.*

*The day's presentations especially allowed service providers who work with the Haitian community to better understand cultural issues specific to Haitian immigrants. Lunine Pierre-Jérôme, Ed. D., presented a workshop on the relationship between vodou and mental health, and the influence of Haitian culture on health-care seeking behaviors. Ms. Pierre-Jérôme, who is both a vodou practitioner and an educator, spoke passionately and knowledgeably about the topic.*

*She began her workshop by introducing the participants to the various loas, or vodou ancestral spirits. Next she discussed the importance of vodou in Haitian culture and how it permeates many aspects of daily life. Throughout the workshop, participants were very engaged in the topic, and there were many questions and even some debates. Ms. Pierre-Jérôme also explored the stigma attached to vodou practices, which originating in colonial times in Haiti when vodou was often kept secret for fear of persecution of its practitioners. She explained how this might make vodou practitioners less likely to discuss their religion.*

*An important part of the presentation was the description of the most common types of mental illness among Haitians. Ms. Pierre-Jérôme stressed the importance of cultural competence for service providers working with Haitians, and described how important language is for Haitians relative to explaining symptoms and situations. She said that many Haitians might not describe their symptoms as depression, post-traumatic stress, or paranoia, but might express them in the context of their culture. Additionally, she explained that symptoms which might resemble schizophrenia or delusional disorders could be understood differently by those who have knowledge about vodou. The workshop concluded with recommendations for service providers on keeping an open mind about and making a concerted effort to understand the elements of Haitian culture and religion that affect the way Haitian immigrants seek mental health care.*

### **International Women's Day 2009**

On Saturday, March 7, 2009 AFAB hosted the International Women's Day event at the Great Hall in Dorchester. The theme of the event was "The Impact of the Global Financial Crisis on our Community." The event featured speakers Lunine Pierre-Jérôme, Dr. Marie Louise Jean-Baptiste, and Lesly René. The event's three workshops focused on the economic impact of the crisis in the community, and physical and mental health, and education in times of crisis.

### **Mother's Day Event Modern-Day Slavery in Bateyes**

On May 30, 2009 we screened Amy Serrano's documentary "The Sugar Babies," a film which sheds light on the struggles of the Haitian youth who work as virtual slaves on sugar plantations (bateyes) in the Dominican Republic. Hélène Koscielniak, a French Canadian author of the book *Marraine* ("Godmother") was a guest speaker for the event. Following the film, she led a discussion on the experience of Haitian women working in bateyes. For more information on the situation of Haitian workers on bateyes, please visit: <http://kiskeya-alternative.org/mudha>



*AFAB Domestic Violence Forum workshop*



*Massachusetts Lieutenant Governor, Tim Murray, presents a proclamation to Jane Doe, Inc. on behalf of state domestic violence providers at Governor's Council meeting on October 7, 2009, Boston. From left: Curt Rogers, Lt. Governor Murray, Sabrina Santiago, Kumu Gupta, Debra Robbin, Mary Lauby, and Carline Desiré*

## Calendar of Events

- **Interviews/Domestic Violence Awareness Month**

**Radio Nouveauté**  
Monday, October 5 at 9 am  
Radio station 1640 AM

**Tele Kreyòl (BNN)**  
Tuesday, October 6 at 8:20 pm  
BNN-Channel 23

**Tele Lumiere**  
October 11 and 14 at 7 pm, October 15 at 9 pm  
Channel 9 Brockton, MA

**Camera Mosaïque**  
Sunday, October 18, time TBA  
Comcast, Channel 283

### AFAB Fundraiser

Sunday, October 25, 7 pm

Emeline Michel, and Melanj  
The Historic Strand Theatre  
543 Columbia Road  
Dorchester, MA

For tickets call AFAB 617-287-0096; and  
following area businesses: Unitransfer, Rapid  
Financial Services, and M&S Beauty Supply

- **Ancestor Day Dinner**  
Saturday, January 2, 2010 at 6 pm  
KAFANM, 330 Fuller Street
- **Ayiti Demen & French classes**  
Saturday, January 16, 2010  
KAFANM, 330 Fuller Street
- **ESL and Literacy classes**  
Tuesday, January 19, 2010  
KAFANM, 330 Fuller Street
- **International Women's Day Event**  
Saturday, March 6, 2010 at 9 am  
Great Hall, Codman Square, Dorchester, MA
- **Haitian Mother's Day Celebration**  
Sunday, May 30, 2010  
Event Details to be announced
- **Annual Clergy Breakfast**  
Saturday, June 12, 2010 at 9 am,  
Great Hall, Codman Square, Dorchester, MA
- **Annual Domestic Violence Forum**  
Saturday, August 7, 2010 at 9 am  
Great Hall, Codman Square, Dorchester, MA

For more information regarding the Domestic Violence program, please contact:

**Carmelle Bonhomètre,**

Program Director: (617) 287-0096  
[cbonhometre@afab-kafanm.org](mailto:cbonhometre@afab-kafanm.org)

**Myrdell Belizaire:** Civil Legal Advocate  
Tuesday (617) 779-2151  
Wednesday-Thursday  
(617) 288-9500 Ext: 251  
[mbelizaire@afab-kafanm.org](mailto:mbelizaire@afab-kafanm.org)

## Haitian Roundtable on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Clergy Breakfast

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The second panelist, the Rev. Emmanuel Daphnis, works with youth in Boston and sees firsthand how mental health issues and domestic violence can have an impact on adolescents. He spoke about how the clergy has a duty and obligation to the families in the church. "With faith comes prayer," said Pastor Daphnis, who at the same time underscored that "it is important to be proactive. He added, "reacting to the issue will not solve anything, instead action must be taken to help in the termination and future prevention of domestic violence." Pastor Daphnis also spoke of the church's need to have resources readily available to its members—particularly resources which help church congregations increase their understanding of domestic violence issues.

The third panelist, Donald Laroche, Esq., contributed to the discussion on domestic violence by discussing aspects of the law relevant to domestic violence cases, including immigration and civil law. He identified "oblivion to the law" as one of the most prevalent reasons of domestic violence within the Haitian community. "It is imperative that as clergy members, we know and understand the American law," Attorney Laroche said. He also stated that it is important that clergy members be aware of times when issues of domestic violence may arise. According to Mr. Laroche, tax season can sometimes be a stressful period for some families. In addition, difficulties with raising children, issues with infidelity, and tax returns can be elements that lead to domestic violence cases. Mr. Laroche discussed the importance of the clergy's understanding of the "language of domestic violence." Finally, he stressed that domestic violence victims should call the police first. "Once domestic violence is suspected tell [victims] to call the police." Laroche says, "Do not call the pastor or the priest [first]; let the law deal with it and then come to us."

Overall, the Breakfast was a success, with all clergy members indicating interest in attending next year. Many participants gave us good ideas for ways to make the breakfast even better. Help us in our mission to educate the community on how to best work with issues of domestic violence: please consider attending the Clergy Breakfast on Saturday, June 12, 2010 and invite members of your congregation as well.

AFAB would like to thank the following individuals for their contributions:

Carolyn Agee, Boston College Social Work Intern  
Bianca Sassine, Boston College Social Work Intern  
Lilly Preer, Connecticut College Intern  
Jessie Odegard, Simmons College Social Work Intern  
Ruth Victorin, Boston College Volunteer

**AFAB****WISH LIST**

Laptop computers

Art supplies  
(markers, pencils,  
paper for children's  
programs)

White board

**VOLUNTEERS  
NEEDED**

Social Work Interns  
Management Interns  
Literacy Instructors  
Office Support

**DEKLARASYON****Gwoup Tabwond Ayisyen an sou  
Vyolans Domestik ak Aso Seksyèl**

**Nou** menm sitwayen konsekan nan Massachusetts,  
**DEKLARE**

Vyolans Domestik ak Aso Seksyèl afekte tout aspè  
kominote Ayisyen an tankou nan tout lòt kominote;

Lè nou konsidere nivo vyolans nan kominote nou an  
kounye a nou wè li ijan pou nou adrese pwoblèm  
Vyolans Domestik ak Aso Seksyèl;

Ke seswa viktim ouswa abizè, ouswa kominote a  
nou tout nou sibi risk ak konsekans mankman nou  
pou nou denonse epi dechouke pwoblèm sa yo.  
Li nesèsè pou nou mete tèt nou ansanm pou nou  
konbat pwoblèm Vyolans Domestik ak Aso Seksyèl  
ki afekte fanm, gason, timoun ak kominote a  
toutantye;

Nan yon efò pou fè konsyantizasyon sou sityasyon  
tèt chaje sa a nan kominote ayisyèn nan;

Nou menm manm Tabwond Ayisyen sou Vyolans  
Domestik ak Aso Seksyèl la nou dakò ak  
deklarasyon sa a epi nou pran angajman nou pou  
nou pote yon chanjman konsiderab nan lavi nou ak  
nan lavi lezòt yo.

Kèk manb nan Tabwond lan:

**Association of Haitian Women of Boston (AFAB),  
Boston Area Rape Crisis Center (BARCC),  
Department of Children and Families (DCF), Haitian  
American Public Health Initiatives (HAPHI), Haitian  
Multi Service Center (HMSC), Massachusetts  
Community Health Services (MCHS), Suffolk County  
District Attorney, Family Justice Center (FJC),  
Boston Police Department, Safe Haven, Greater  
Boston Legal Services (GBLS), Boston Medical  
Center (SISTA), Codman Square Health Center.**

**Nou mande tout moun pou kanpe avèk nou.**

**DECLARATION  
Of The Haitian Roundtable on  
Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault**

**WE**, the concerned citizens of Massachusetts,  
**DECLARE**

Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault affect all aspects  
of the Haitian community, as well as all aspects of all  
other communities;

Given the current level of violence within the community,  
it is urgent that Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault be  
addressed within the Haitian community;

This *state of urgency* within the community has, also, in  
part, been caused by the failure of us all to recognize and  
address Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault;

The risks and consequences caused by this community  
failure to recognize and address Domestic Violence and  
Sexual Assault are borne by everyone---victims, abusers,  
the community and community leaders.

It is crucial to provide a united presence on domestic  
violence and sexual assault for Haitian women, men and  
the community at large;

In an effort to collectively raise awareness to this  
alarming situation in the Haitian community,  
We, the members of the Haitian Domestic Violence and  
Sexual Assault Roundtable, acknowledge the terms of  
this declaration and commit to making a significant  
change in our life and the lives of others:

Partial list of Roundtable members:

**Association of Haitian Women of Boston (AFAB),  
Boston Area Rape Crisis Center (BARCC),  
Department of Children and Families (DCF), Haitian  
American Public Health Initiatives (HAPHI), Haitian  
Multi Service Center (HMSC), Massachusetts  
Community Health Services (MCHS), Suffolk County  
District Attorney, Family Justice Center (FJC),  
Boston Police Department, Safe Haven, Greater  
Boston Legal Services (GBLS), Boston Medical  
Center (SISTA), Codman Square Health Center.**

**We ask YOU to stand beside us!**

**AFAB-KAFANM SERVICES:**

**HOUSING AND HOUSING ADVOCACY:** KAFANM runs six housing units and a community center. AFAB assists newly arrived Haitian immigrants in applying for public housing benefits and facilitates workshops on housing issues such as tenant rights, home buying, etc.

**ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS:** Our adult education programs provide individuals with the fundamental skills necessary to learn English, secure gainful employment and to better integrate themselves into society.

**YOUTH DEVELOPMENT:** Our youth programs enrich the lives of our students through the delivery of solid academic and social skills. They prepare students to face life's challenges and bridge generational and cultural gaps within the Haitian community.

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION:** AFAB affirms the right of abused women to be safe and to prosecute their offenders when necessary. A cornerstone of our mission, the domestic violence prevention program provides essential support to domestic violence survivors and their families while they attempt to regain control of their lives. The Haitian Round Table on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault meets every first Wednesday of the month with different providers joining forces in the fight against domestic violence.

**COMMUNITY OUTREACH:** The outreach program engages in raising awareness on all our social services, specifically on domestic violence prevention and immigration issues.