



# 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,

The month of March is dedicated to women, with the 8<sup>th</sup> specifically to International Women. For the past 23 years, AFAB has had a tradition to commemorate International Women's Day by reflecting on the gains of the women's movement and the challenges that still face us as a community of women and girls.

We remember Magalie Marcelin (from Kay Fann), Myriam Merlet (from Enfofanm) and Anne Marie Coriolan (from SOFA), our feminist leaders who died in the earthquake of January 10, 2011. They devoted their lives to improving the conditions of women in Haiti. Their advocacy led to the law that changed rape from a misdemeanor to a criminal act with a jail sentence from 10 to 15 years.

Yet, a year after the devastated earthquake of January 12, 2010, hundreds of women and girls endure rape in the tents of Port-Au-Prince without any prosecution. They continue to share latrines without lights and bathe in public, a condition that jeopardizes their safety.

In this issue, we highlight the vulnerability of Haitian women to sexual and domestic violence and ask that you propose actions to bring about peace and justice for them. Please consider supporting women's grassroots organizations in Haiti and the US, and advocating for fair and just US foreign policy towards Haiti.

For more information on how you can help, contact AFAB at 617-287-0096 or email [cdesire@afab-kafanm.org](mailto:cdesire@afab-kafanm.org).

Together, we continue to make a difference.

—Carline Desiré, Executive Director

## Sexual and Domestic Violence and Other Forms of Violence: Global and Local Political and Personal Violence

In Haiti, two-thirds of the population lives below poverty level, literacy is 52% and unemployment over 70%. As a result, a high percentage of women are confined to the domestic sector. Under these circumstances, domestic violence and sexual assault become the norm.

- In the 1990's after the coup d'etat that ousted former president Jean Bertrand Aristide, rape became a 'weapon of terror' for personal targeting and political retaliation.
- Since 2004, there has been a resurgence in rape cases reported

The January 12, 2010 earthquake in Haiti resulted in: 250,000 deaths, 300,572 injured, 3 million affected – 1/3 of the population of 9.6 million.

More than half of the 1.5 million Haitians living in tents (temporary shelters) are women and young girls, and they often become victims of violence, both physical and sexual. Much of this violence is rooted in our long history. We come from a colonial heritage of cultural violence: from the old master inflicting pain and suffering on the slaves, to the new masters inflicting pain and suffering to the over 52% female population of Haiti.

The pain persisted during colonialism, neo-colonialism, and as refugees in the Guantanamo camps in the early 1990's – sometimes just for being BLACK.

### Why do Women Continue to be Victimized?

Because domestic violence is prevalent in Haiti in the home, in neighborhoods and in the wider community, The Association of Haitian Women (AFAB) believes that 80% of women from Haiti now in the United States of America are survivors of domestic and sexual assault.

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## Seminè sou Edikasyon

Jou kite 23 fevriye 2011 la, AFAB ak Union of Minority Neighborhoods te mete tèt ansanm pou yo te fè yo gwo wonble sou zafè edikasyon avèk Doktè Carole Johnson ak Doktè Lunine Pierre-Jerôme. Doktè Pierre-Jerôme te mete aksan sou pwoblèm elèv ayisyen yo ap travèse:

- Difikilte pou jwenn pwofesyonèl konpetan ki konn kilti lakay ki kab reponn ak bezwen etidyan ayisyen yo
- Difikilte pou etidyan ayisyen ki djanm yo jwenn aksè nan klas avanse nan pwogram ELL yo
- Pa gen ase sipò sikolojik pou ayisyen ki vini apre tranblemandetè a
- Pa gen ase sipò pou etidyan ki gen pwoblèm sikolojik, konpòtman epi/oubyen pwoblèm pou yo apran

Doktè Pierre-Jerôme deklare si paran ayisyen yo kontinye pa angaje yo nan edikasyon pitit yo nan lekòl piblik yo, talè konsa tout bonjan pwogram solid ki marye ak kilti nou, ak lang nou ap disparèt.

Doktè Johnson te reponn sou plizyè pwoblèm kite sòlve nan sal la pami afriken-ameriken ak ayisyen-ameriken yo:

- Lekòl espesyalize yo ki fèmèn tankou lekòl enjenyè ki nan Hyde Park avèk akademi pou jistis sosyal
- Bonjan sèvis ki marye kilti ak lang pou gwoup ethnik tankou ayisyen ak panyòl yo
- Pa gen ase gason nwa kòm modèl nan sistèm lekòl piblik nan boston

Doktè Johnson te fè tout moun konnen se pa pou paran sèlman lage timoun yo lekòl men tou se pou yo kontinye edikasyon an lakay yo epi pou yo rann sistèm lekòl piblik nan boston responsab. Li fè tout moun konnen ap gen lajan pou sèvis tradiksyon/entèpretasyon pou paran imigran yo kabab pi aktif nan sistèm lekòl lan.

Anpil paran te fè remake ke moun nwa ak imigran dwe kontinye goumen pou pi bon sèvis edikasyon paske sistèm lekòl piblik nan boston an pat kreye pou yo.



*Workshop conducted at the FY 2010 DV Annual Forum*

**Please join us on August 6, 2011 for our annual Domestic Violence forum.**

On January 16, 2011, over 230 Haitians and Haitian-Americans defied the snow storms to attend the Haitian community remembrance of the catastrophic earthquake of January 12, 2010 at Roxbury Community College. Community members shared their frustration and ideal for Haiti in an hour segment of reflection.

During the first half of the program, the result of a survey- completed by 173 people in the audience- was reported:

- 63% of the respondents stated that 'safe drinking water in all of the departments in Haiti as top priority.
- 53% of the respondents voted that 'watchdog organizations reporting on the 3.3 billion collected on behalf of Haiti is the best way for Haitians in the US to influence speedy actions to rebuild Haiti.
- 60% of the respondents agreed that the number one action that Haitians in Massachusetts can take to bring about change for newly arrived Haitians is to request that 'Temporary Protected Status' include earthquake survivors who arrived in the US after January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2010.

## Calendar of Events

- **Tune in every 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday to hear AFAB on 88.1 FM or live on [wmbr.org](http://wmbr.org) from 8am - 10am (in Haitian Creole)**

*AFAB Invites You to the Annual  
Fundraising Dinner  
Saturday, October 15, 2011  
6:30 PM*

- **Ayiti Demen**  
Saturdays from 2PM to 5PM
- **French Class**  
Saturdays from 1PM to 2PM
- **Math tutoring** with the Haitian Scientific Society  
Saturdays from 3PM to 5PM
- **Annual Clergy Breakfast**  
Saturday, June 11, 2011 at 9 am,  
Boston Public Library- **Mattapan Branch**  
Mattapan, MA 02126
- **Annual Domestic Violence Forum**  
Saturday, August 6, 2011 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)

AFAB would like to thank the following for their contributions:

Judith Baker, Dorchester People for Peace  
Danielle Georges  
Hayat Imam, Dorchester People for Peace  
Kelley Ready, Dorchester People for Peace  
The Haitian Scientific Society  
Boston University Volunteers  
New York University Volunteers  
Carole Bergin and Harvard University Volunteers

## 2010 AFAB FUNDRAISING DINNER

Our annual fundraising dinner was a huge success! Not only did tickets go towards supporting our work at AFAB, we were pleased to honor three distinguished members of our community. Judith Alexandre, Carmelle Bonhometre and Dr. Astrid Desrosiers were honored for their continued dedication to improving the lives of women in MA. Please join us on October 15, 2011 for AFAB's annual fundraising dinner!



*J.Alexandre, J.Teneus, C. Menager, C.Desire, C. Bonhometre., A. Adrien, MD, L. Pierre-Jerome, Ed..D*

## Education Forum

On February 23, 2011, AFAB and the Union of Minority Neighborhoods conducted an education forum with Drs. Carole Johnson and Lunine Pierre-Jerome. Dr. Pierre-Jerome highlighted some of the challenges the Haitian students face including:

- Lack of culturally competent professionals that can respond to the needs of Haitian students because of the scarcity of Haitians in the profession
- Inaccessibility of talented Haitian students to Advanced Work Class in programs for English Language Learners
- Insufficient psychological support to newly arrived Haitian earthquake victims
- Inadequate support to students with psychological, behavioral, and/or cognitive challenges

Dr. Pierre-Jérôme warned that if Haitian parents continue to be inactive in the education of their children in public schools, holistic programs that are culturally and linguistically grounded will soon be a story of the past.

Dr. Johnson responded to several concerns raised by the African-American and Haitian-American audience. They included:

- Specialized schools closings such as the Engineering school at the Hyde Park Complex and the Social Justice Academy and its peace circle program
- Culturally and linguistically appropriate services for ethnic populations such as the Haitians and the Hispanics
- Lack of Black male role models in the Boston Public School systems

Dr. Johnson reiterated that parents should not only drop off their children at school but also provide education reinforcement at home and keep the Boston Public Schools system accountable. She also stated that there will be new funding for translation/interpretation services so immigrant parents can get more involved in the school system.

Several parents remarked that Black and immigrant parents must continue the fight for better education services as the Boston Public School system was not built for them.

## AFAB WISH LIST

10 Laptop computers

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

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Social Work Interns  
Management Interns  
Literacy Instructors  
Office Support

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In their newly adopted USA, Haitian women continue to face a multitude of pain and suffering. Domestic Violence survivors in the Haitian immigrant community face challenges that encompass:

### Social Barriers

- Lack of food, appropriate shelters (DV and Others), social support
- Isolation, depression and other emotional trauma
- Lack of education
- Language barrier
- Fear of authority
- Losing custody of children as a result of no home, lack of economic means

### Economic Barriers

- No income or low income
- Exploitation and low wages at work

### Political Barriers

- No understanding of rights in the United States
- No understanding of State agency systems
- No understanding of judicial system
- Fear of deportation

The women of AFAB are activists conducting prevention and intervention on Domestic Violence, and advocates on a wide range of immigration issues. We organize to raise awareness and consciousness on domestic violence and engage individuals and the

Haitian community in effective actions and solutions.

It is also an imperative for AFAB to address personal violence from an individual as well as a collective perspective. This two-pronged collective work must involve both the Haitian community and the wider community. In spite of being a small grassroots organization, AFAB takes up the challenge of working with bigger organizations and State entities, participating regularly on panels, in forums and multi-disciplinary Round Tables in greater Boston. As existing systems were not created to address immigrant needs, we continue to advocate for changes that will benefit society as a whole. We believe that it is the courageous efforts of women and men who daily confront unjust power structures and challenge oppressive policies that will bring about social and economic justice.

*(Summary of Carline Desire's presentation at the Jane Doe, Inc.'s annual meeting, Dec. 10, 2017).*



AFAB Fundraising Dinner 2006

## 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.