



## HAITIAN CONGRESS TO FORTIFY HAITI and HAITIAN CONGRESS FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

### THE WAY FORWARD TO FORTIFY US: BEYOND DUAL / MULTI-NATIONALITY

*Now that the amendments to the Constitution of 1987 have been made effective, restoring Haitian nationality/citizenship to Haitians who have become naturalized citizens of their host nations and granting Haitian nationality/citizenship to foreign-born children of Haitians, how do we mobilize Haitians in the Diaspora in service of Haiti?*

Two of French writer Victor Hugo's famous quotes capture the audacity of our work as the Haitian Congress to Fortify Haiti and the Haitian Congress for Civic Engagement PAC in this historical moment.

The first is often translated as:

***"You can resist an invading army; you cannot resist an idea whose time has come."***

The second is, specifically, an admonition:

***"Dream no small dreams. They have no power to stir the souls of men"***

The mission of the Haitian Congress is:

*To mobilize ourselves as Haitians in the Diaspora to help develop Haiti. To strengthen and organize our human and material resources, our children, friends and allies of Haiti to make a*

*positive contribution towards the creation of a stable, peaceful, and prosperous Haiti where we, as Haitians in the Diaspora can reintegrate ourselves into the life of our country.*

This is the "**idea whose time has come.**" This mission is "**the big dream**" that has stirred our souls and excited the imaginations of many other Haitians in Haiti and across her Diaspora. We have been passionate about our homeland no matter where we are in the world. We have not only been passionate but expressive about the strategies and tactics to move Haiti forward to prosperity, stability and peace and to reintegrate into our country. We must find ways to achieve the sometimes daunting objectives of mobilization and reintegration.

In general, the Diaspora of every nation represent the connection between their States of origin and their host States. This is especially due to the ongoing movement of human beings, of capital, ideas, cultural products and the electronic flow of information. Thus, the politics of nationality or dual nationality, of representation or vote; the politics of cultural bond, religious or symbolic are simply increasing throughout the world, which allows the people living in the Diaspora to remain affectionately and materially connected to their States of origin. Most of these people, such as the Irish, the Jews and others are unified and speak with one voice. Consequently, their governments find it necessary to pull together with them and meet their needs and aspirations to allow them to fully participate in the life of their countries. In return, those countries kill two birds at once by also benefiting from their competences, knowledge and resources.

Haiti does not lack for brilliant sons and daughters, whether inside or outside of her borders. Though united in commitment to a stable, prosperous, and peaceful Haiti, we have differed, and may continue to differ on significant strategic steps. In order to see that Haiti in our lifetime, it is imperative that we join our efforts and get organized around a shared mission.

In fact, it was through collaboration with several other compatriots that we were able to solidified and finalize a major victory via President Martelly's act of publication of the Errata to make effective the Amendments restoring Haitian nationality/citizenship to Haitians (perhaps 2 million) who have become naturalized citizens of their host nations and granting Haitian nationality/citizenship to foreign born of children of Haitians (perhaps 7 million). In many ways, amending the Constitution was a crucial step in the right direction and it is not surprising that the process and the victory stirred the souls of so many.

### **HISTORY OF THE HAITIAN CONGRESS AND ITS WORK ON THE ISSUE OF DUAL/MULTI- CITIZENSHIP/NATIONALITY**

The Haitian Congress to Fortify Haiti (HCFH) and the Haitian Congress for Civic Engagement PAC (HC-PAC) are sister organizations formally established by a group of Chicago area activists in 2006 to help make our contributions toward the development of Haiti. Although some of us had worked together from time to time, it was either on band-aid projects with little or no significant long term impact, or local/parochial projects limited in scope to our respective departments or regions. While collectively frustrated by the lack of stability and progress in Haiti, we were in particular divided on the basis of partisanship.

In 2004, however, we were forced together into serious work out of the sheer necessity to respond to the needs of our brothers and sisters in Gonaives victimized by hurricane Jeanne.

When the news of the devastation of the hurricane broke, the broader community, including the media, looked to us as Haitians, anticipating our response and wondering how to help. In spite of our differences, we came together and responded to the crisis. We mobilized the Haitian community as well as friends and allies of Haiti to raise support for our brothers and sisters of Gonaives.

Following our work in 2004 as the Haitian Relief Fund of Illinois, the activists who would later constitute HCFH/HC-PAC took stock of our potential strength to impact US, French, Canadian policies towards Haiti. We reflected on the tremendous source of human capital that the Diaspora represents for Haiti. We considered the actual value we add to Haiti through our remittances and the many other contributions we could make. We debated in earnest how the Haitians in the Diaspora could best help Haiti achieve prosperity, stability and peace. So, **we decided that one of the key links to helping Haiti is to fortify Haitians across the Diaspora so we can, in turn, fortify Haiti.**

Our work led us toward a Dual/Multi-citizenship Campaign. We began by researching the growth of nations with significant populations abroad and the potential role of dual citizenship in unleashing this large pool of human resources to help Haiti achieve prosperity, stability and peace.

After a period of intense exchange of ideas and debate, we reached consensus around the fundamental importance of Dual/Multi-Nationality as a means of economic and social renewal. It was clear to us that if the Diaspora remains dispersed and not integrated into the life of Haitian society, its potential will not be realized. So, we felt that the Haitian Diaspora needed to be mobilized around this objective and that we should enlist the Haitian government in the project of removing the barriers that stood in the way of our integration. Unfortunately, our own Constitution stood in the way via its article 13 which stated: **“Haitian nationality is lost by naturalization in a foreign country.”** We reached consensus that this Article had to be amended to allow the sons and daughters of Haiti dispersed throughout the world to reclaim their Haitian Nationality to maximize their contributions. Committed to the idea, we developed a strategic plan to win support, and build a mass demand in Haiti and in the Diaspora. We elaborated an agenda of work for the period of November 2006 to July 2009.

**November 2006.** HCFH and HCPAC led a coalition of activists and scholars through study sessions of Haitian Constitution in preparation

for parliamentary delegation to Chicago under leadership of Senate President Lambert. A **Petition to amend the 1987 Constitution** was **presented** to the parliamentarians before crowd of 500 people. Thereafter, we established sub-committee to work strictly on Dual Citizenship to further articulate position, educate our local community, organize a national Conference on Dual Citizenship and circulate petitions to gather signatures.

### **January – October 2007**

HCFH conducted series of workshops on Dual Citizenship aimed at local leaders, circulating constitutional articles and “Petition for the Amendment of the articles of the 1987 Constitution. Members of HCFH appeared on local radio programs to discuss the campaign and announce the meetings. At every event during that period, we articulated our position, distributed literature and gathered signatures.

### **November 17, 2007**

HCFH held first national and community-wide event on Dual Citizenship in commemoration of Bataille de Vertières. A delegation of twelve Haitian **Officials\*** led by Senator Lambert, the then-President of the Senate Député Maxeau Balthazar, Treasurer of the Chamber of Deputies, Maître Gérard Gourgues and some journalists were in attendance. HCFH made a comprehensive argument for amending our 1987 Constitution to allow Dual Citizenship. This delegation of Parliamentarians also visited other states and carried the message that our Constitution must be amended to allow Dual Citizenship.

### **June 2008**

HCFH held a two-day National Conference on Dual Citizenship in Chicago.

The conference was attended by several individuals representing themselves and their organizations. The participants included Economist Harry Fouche, Chairman of the Consortium for Haitian Empowerment (CHE), Dr. Daniel Faustin, M.D., an officer of SIMACT, Inc., Accountant Frantz Bourget, Census 2010 Organization, Professor

Joseph Alfred, CEO of Haitians Community Relations, Inc., Dr. Bernier Lauredan, M.D., President of The Haitian League, Attorney Joseph (Makhandal) Champagne, Vice Chairman and Attorney Emmanuel Coffy, Chairman of the Haitian American Leadership Council, Inc., Mecca AKA Grimo, Haitian-American Poet/Rap Artist and others. Two of the organizations represented were political parties: Fusion des Sociaux Démocrates was represented by its President Victor Benoit; Union was represented by its President, Pasteur Chavannes Jeune. Both parties are based in Haiti. Among the individuals who attended were Haitian elected officials, Senator Roudolph Boulos and Representative Maxeau Balthazar and U.S. elected officials, U.S. Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky and Illinois State Senator Kwame Raoul.

A Conference packet that included a questionnaire on Dual Citizenship, a Proposition de Loi to amend the Constitution, requests for participation on a national and international effort to hold an international Conference on Dual Citizenship, requests for participants to assist in the development of the Proposition de Loi, etc. **was distributed to the attendees.**

### **October 2008**

Representatives of HCFH/HC-PAC traveled to New Jersey to a Conference/ Convention sponsored by the Haitian League and HALEC. We presented our argument to representatives from various parts of the United States and to representatives of the Haitian Government present, including then President of the Senate Kelly Bastien and the Chief of Staff of Prime Minister Michèle Pierre-Louis.

### **July 23, 2009**

The HCFH held an International Conference in Haiti at the Karibe Convention Center. This time, a more significant number of Haitian lawmakers attended. Officials such as Senators Andris Riché (then vice-president of the Senate), Edmonde Beauzil, Joseph Lambert, Gerard Mathurin, Deputes Patrick Domond, and Gasner Douze attended and participated. Also present were members of Haitian organizations

working in Haiti, such as Miss Evelyn Saintvil of Jeunesse en March Pour L'Avenir (JMA), Mr. Branly Oge for Rosny Desroches of Civil Society, Attorney Serge-Henri Vieux, a member of the Working Group of the Presidential Commission on the amendments to the 1987 Constitution, and Mr. Baugene Bien-Aime, of Organization Communautaire pour le Developpement Rural (OCODER).

As well, several organizations from the Diaspora were represented and participated in this important conference. This group included Dr. Joseph Baptiste, President of NOAH, Dr. Daniel Faustin for the Haitian American National Alliance, Dr. Jean-Roosevelt Clarisme, Haitian American Leadership Conference (HALEC), Attorney Jean-Michel Voltaire and Dr. Bertie Labissiere of the Alliance of Haitians Overseas, Attorney/Alderman Joseph (Makhandal, Yanick Martin for The Haitian League, Dr. Lherison Domond, of Haiti Tourism Development and others.<sup>1</sup>

This conference had excellent national media coverage and it reverberated throughout the country for weeks.

Thereafter, we returned to the United States and continued our work. We continued to hold a series of national telephone conference calls every Saturday from 4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. weekly to educate as many people as possible on the importance of Dual Citizenship until the momentous vote of the 48th Legislature. **We, along with our friends and allies, continued to submit propositions of law to the sitting legislature and to lobby them to propose the Dual Citizenship Amendment to the Constitution so that the succeeding legislature (the 49th) could ratify it.**

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<sup>1</sup> Conference Report in English or French at [haitiancongresspac.org/files/Haitian\\_Congress-Dual\\_Citizenship\\_Conference\\_Report-July\\_2009.pdf](http://haitiancongresspac.org/files/Haitian_Congress-Dual_Citizenship_Conference_Report-July_2009.pdf) or [haitiancongresspac.org/files/Haitian\\_Congress-Double\\_Nationalite\\_Rapport\\_de\\_la\\_Conference\\_de\\_2009.pdf](http://haitiancongresspac.org/files/Haitian_Congress-Double_Nationalite_Rapport_de_la_Conference_de_2009.pdf)

## **SEPTEMBER 14, 2009, THE 48<sup>TH</sup> LEGISLATURE ACTED TO RECOMMEND THAT THE 1987 CONSTITUTION BE AMENDED**

21 out of 22 Senators present and 71 out of 73 Deputies present of the 48th Legislature, *representing 70% and 71.7%, respectively, above the necessary 2/3*, and nearly 100% of those present, had the vision and the courage to vote in favor of President Préval's proposal to recommend to the 49th Legislature that the Constitution of 1987 be amended to grant Dual Citizenship to Haitians who have become naturalized citizens of other nations as well as to their children. **This was an extremely important and historic step for our future and we felt vindicated and encouraged by this success.**<sup>2</sup>

Immediately after this victory, the HCFH and the HC-PAC re-launched our Saturday telephone conference calls from 4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. weekly, until Haitian elections on November 28, 2010. We called on those who united to seize the moment, and make the passing of this legislation a top priority for the incoming Legislature.

As we all know, the elections of November 28, 2010 were not completed until March 20, 2011. This was a difficult period for all of us. Like most Haitian organizations across the Diaspora, we prioritized solidarity, relief, and support work to respond to the immediate needs created or put in sharp perspective by earthquake of [January 12, 2010](#).

Nevertheless, we continued our advocacy work connecting with the members of Parliament who were not up for election and some of the candidates as well. We were joined in this phase by the Haitian Diaspora Federation (HDF), its member organizations, and Bam Dwam, which joined us in intensifying the pressure through online petitions, letters, press releases, and other means.

### **April 2011**

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<sup>2</sup> See our Press Release of September 16, 2009 at [haitiancongresspac.org/more-press-releases](http://haitiancongresspac.org/more-press-releases)

The HCFH responded to the call of the Ministre Des Haïtiens Vivant à L'Etranger (MHAVE), Edwin Paraison and traveled to Haiti to attend the "Journée de la Diaspora." We also used the opportunity to re-intensify lobbying while in Haiti. We held press conferences<sup>3</sup>; we appeared on radio and television stations; we took out ads to advance our demand to amend the Constitution to grant multi/dual citizenship. We also intervened at press conferences being held by President-elect Martelly to spread our message. We approached individual senators and deputies during the period of uncertainty while many were trying to determine whether their positions would be secured. We advocated up to the eve of the vote in the General Assembly. In solidarity, Bam Dwam also remained on the scene until the historic vote.

During the period of uncertainty that followed the publication of the Amendments by President Préval, we remained active. We issued an open letter<sup>4</sup> to President Martelly proposing that he republish the Amendments along with the Errata, as is standard procedure when a published official law is found to contain errors. We continued to develop relationships with our allies on the ground such as Rosny Desroches and others representing Civil Society who had made the same demands. At the request of Rosny Desroches and Civil Society, we prepared for publication a document arguing the *The Role of the Diaspora*.<sup>5</sup>

## **May, 2112**

The HCFH/HC-CE traveled to Haiti to continue to advocate for the re-publication of the Amendments and the Errata.

## **July 19, 2012**

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<sup>3</sup> Listen to one of our press conferences here: [haitiancongresspac.org/photo-gallery/&album=3](http://haitiancongresspac.org/photo-gallery/&album=3)

<sup>4</sup> [haitiancongresspac.org/files/Lettre\\_Ouverte\\_a\\_Son\\_excellence\\_Monsieur\\_le\\_President\\_de\\_la\\_Republique\\_Rev.09-08.pdf](http://haitiancongresspac.org/files/Lettre_Ouverte_a_Son_excellence_Monsieur_le_President_de_la_Republique_Rev.09-08.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> [haitiancongresspac.org/files/Role\\_de\\_la\\_Diaspora.pdf](http://haitiancongresspac.org/files/Role_de_la_Diaspora.pdf)

President Martelly re-published the Amendments and the Errata in Le Moniteur, Haiti's official publication, putting the Amendments granting Dual Citizenship to Haitians who have become citizens of their host nations and the foreign-born children of a Haitian mother or a Haitian father in full force and effect.

## **HOW DO WE MOVE FORWARD**

**Much in the way that the HCFH/HCPAC and others pushed to make dual citizenship a reality, the entire Diaspora must continue to work for greater organization amongst ourselves and the strengthening of our interactions with institutions in Haiti.** This includes developing synergistic working relationships with agencies of the Haitian state responsible for the development and implementation of regulations and policy enabling re-nationalized Haitians to exercise their new rights and obligations, including putting in place the process by which the Haitians in the Diaspora will vote; to motivate these Haitians to return home for short or long stays; to integrate re-nationalized Haitians in the planning for the application of their own time, skills, and resources; participate in all aspects of Haitian life and support Haitian interests inside the various metropolis in the United States, Canada, France, & in the Dominican Republic, Bahamas and elsewhere.

Among the most significant outcomes of the amendment process is the newly **acquired right to vote for Haitians across the Diaspora**, without distinction. While non-naturalized Haitians citizens living abroad have always had the right to vote, there has been no mechanism permitting them to exercise this right without returning to Haiti. The former Minister of Haitians Living Abroad, Daniel Supplice, expressed his desire to facilitate Diaspora voting access through the assignment of identification cards for all Haitians living abroad.

In asserting his support for the Diaspora's right to participate in the political life of the country, the Minister highlights the fact that **we must first be identified**. This process of identification would create a de

facto census of Haitians living abroad, clarifying who we are, where we are, and in what quantities. As the sole entity with the authority to collect and manage such vast amounts sensitive information, it is critical that the Diaspora work with **the Haitian government** through MHAVE and other associated government agencies in realizing such a **census** and in putting it to productive use. This information can benefit not only the government in its efforts to make more systematic use of our talents and resources but, with transparent freedom of information, it can also help us organize ourselves effectively around political and civic life both in and outside of Haiti. However, **passports**, rather than **ID cards**, might be a more viable option, serving the triple purpose of identification, travel, and a **source of revenue** that may potentially offset the cost of implementing a voting apparatus for the Diaspora.

With an expanded citizenry that now includes Haitians naturalized abroad as well as their foreign born children; the need for a **structured method of voting abroad is more pressing than ever and should be a top priority for both the Diaspora and the Government of Haiti**. We must collectively resist the reduction of this victory, through delay or laissez-faire, to merely a mechanism for the state to channel and organize remittances, through taxes or other means.

**In the past, a number of Haitians living abroad were reluctant to adopt a foreign nationality because they feared losing their Haitian nationality. This is not a concern now. They can adopt a foreign nationality** and participate to a large extent in the civic life of their host countries in an open and organized fashion. They can leverage their resources such as money, their votes or otherwise so as to not be invisible. With the right to vote, they could engage in advocacy across racial, ethnic, religious lines around issues relevant to their communities including empowerment, immigration, discrimination, equal access to justice.

Today, with the amendment of the 1987 constitution, the Haitians who have become naturalized citizens of their host nations and foreign-born children of Haitians can do the following:

1. Integrate in the national life of their host countries. They can run for office, seek policy-making positions, build coalition with other groups to help leverage their voices, develop a strong Haiti Lobby, etc...
2. Integrate as well in the national life of the Homeland, Haiti. The country will benefit from their competences and their resources. They will promote the involvement of entrepreneurs, business people and Haitian organizations in the process of reconstruction and will have an impact on the Haitian Government's decisions.
3. Build a strong coalition in order to help Haiti, the Diaspora now more than ever before, must remain connected and speak with one voice using all communication tools available to tell our own story whenever the opportunity presents itself.

The Diaspora must also collaborate with existing community radio programs and news outlets, but also stay in touch with our entire community, which includes Haitians and others, and remain connected to various institutions, schools, universities, colleges, churches, community centers, not only to promote ways to learn about Haiti, but to be engaged with all of the issues that affect the communities we belong to. This kind of solidarity will certainly make a difference not only in Haiti, but across the world.

However, organize people requires and yields organized knowledge, organized skills, and organized relationships. Turning all of that into results commonly requires also organized money. Among the organizations we are familiar with, a few innovators vis-à-vis economic development are Zafèn, Fonkonze, and PromoCapital.

Locally, HCFH / HCPAC have begun to do the following:

- a. Ascertain who in the Chicago area is best positioned to make a difference for Haiti;
- b. Build a database of individuals with the requisite skills, talent, resources or access to build capacity;
- c. Develop sources of sustainable revenue;
- d. Solidify our reach across and engagement with the greater Chicago, state, Midwest, national communities and international communities;
- e. Establish a Permanent Headquarter.

### **REINTEGRATION OF THE DIASPORA INTO HAITI**

While organizing our resources, the Diaspora must collectively focus on developing mechanisms for its reintegration. Part of this focus should be on revitalizing Haiti with an injection of the human capital it has lost. Countries in Asia, Latin America, and Africa have deployed successful strategies that systematically reintegrate their relative Diasporas into life in their homelands. Generally, **these efforts take place through incentivizing students studying in developed countries to return home after studying abroad and through direct transfer of skills and knowledge.**

Many Haitians pursue higher education outside of Haiti, and, because of lack of opportunity in Haiti, many of these students chose opportunities in the U.S. and other developed countries instead of returning Home. There are a few tangible policy strategies that the Haitian Government could use to increase incentives for Haitian students to return to Haiti. The most widely used educational strategy to deter brain drain among Haitian students abroad is known as “**bonding.**” Bonding would involve Haiti working out arrangements with the nations within which its Diaspora lives to create legal policy incentives that require Haitian students to return to Haiti after completing professional/graduate studies.

Generally, Haiti would provide some financial/scholarship support for these students studying abroad, and in return, the students would be required to return Home to be employed in some pre-determined employment (for reduced pay) as repayment for Haiti's investment in their education. Bonding has been widely successful in Nigeria, Ghana, Pakistan, and Taiwan.

Many nations also use **skills transfer initiatives** as the primary way to reintegrate their Diasporas. Haiti is perhaps most well suited to benefit from transfer of knowledge and skills. Some estimate that one of every eight foreign doctors performing in the Diaspora is Haitian. Additionally, Haitians make up a disproportionate number of the 54% of foreign born students that receive PhDs in Engineering.

Haiti's underdeveloped healthcare, infrastructure, and agriculture systems make it well suited to use the scientific skill of the Diaspora to create growth in these areas, perhaps to a greater extent than many more developed nations. For example, Haitian Engineers coming from abroad could share their knowledge with their colleagues in Haiti to help build internationally impactful energy and agricultural innovations in Haiti without the stubbornness of pre-existing systems. This would give Haiti an opportunity to stay green.

### **PREPARING OUR YOUTH IN THE DIASPORA TO ENGAGE WITH AND FOR HAITI**

In order to advance the work of reunification/ reintegration between the Diaspora and Haiti, organizations must create a basis by which we can work together to integrate our youth in the work. We must transfer our languages, customs and culture to our children. We must educate our youth about Haiti. We must also address the needs of Haitian youth who have newly arrived in foreign land. We also need to encourage and support their educational advancement; their entrepreneurial interests;

promote civic engagement in the host nations; organize trips to Haiti; encourage the development of relationships with other Haitian youth in Haiti on all levels. One of the other ways to attract youth in matters related to Haiti is to consistently celebrate all of our historical events such as Independence Day, Flag Day, Bwa Kayiman, Batay Vetyè and other important holidays and events in collaboration with other groups; to ensure the success of community-wide events through mutual support; to promote cultural activities in the area of dance, music, theater, storytelling; etc.

We must also promote a constant flow of information as to what's going on in Haiti and encourage cultural exchanges so we can acquire truthful information to disseminate to our youth and to others. **Many of us outside of the country have held onto and passed down political and personal fears and grievances that skew what our children learn about Haiti.** If that's all we communicate to them in addition to the bad information and news the international media is projecting about Haiti, that negative image is unfortunately the only thing they retain about Haiti. Because of that, organized local and national Haitian communities in the U.S. must adopt efforts to increase their cultural connectedness.

On a broader level, our division of labor could be determined by our assets, positions and limitations because the standard of living of the Diaspora in North America and Europe is generally very different than what we experience in other regions. So, the concept of human capital is harshly literal in places like the Dominican Republic and the Bahamas, where the conditions of labor and denial of equal protection under the law have rendered people of Haitian descent vulnerable, disposable, and stateless, without human rights. Therefore, we, the Haitians living in the US, Canada, France and in other western nations abroad, for lack of a

better term, must take advantage of our unique potential as a pressure group on our adopted nations, on international bodies like the UN, on the Haitian State and on other nations to protect the basic human rights of our Haitian citizens and/or Haitian-descended citizens of these nations such as the Haitian-descended Dominicans. <sup>76</sup> Their intervention would incite those countries in violation to make laws to protect our compatriots.

With regards to solidarity and civic engagement, we must make connections among the concerns, challenges and struggles of the Diaspora wherever we are. As a matter of fact:

- a. The Dominicans of Haitian descent living in the Dominican Republic, most of whom, in the last seven years have been constitutionally stripped of their birthrights, turned into non-persons in the eyes of the State, except for the penal system, been subject to waves of forced deportation, and have historically been legitimate targets of random violence.
- b. The Haitian Diaspora must oppose the ethnic cleansing of Haitian-descended Dominicans, the discriminatory practice of other countries against Haitians and call on the Haitian state to concretely extend newly acquired rights of Haitian citizenship to all renationalized Haitians and foreign-born Haitians NOW.**
- c. The Diaspora of irregular environmental immigrants scattered across South and Central America, is especially victim of human trafficking.
- d. The internal Diaspora of GOUDOUGOUDOU, who still has so many needs, most of which are basic human rights such as, housing, sustenance, opportunity, medical care and safety

## CONCLUSION:

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<sup>6 76</sup> [haitiancongresspac.org/files/Haitian CongressPosition on the Injustices Agaisnt Haitian-Decedned Domincans](http://haitiancongresspac.org/files/Haitian%20CongressPosition%20on%20the%20Injustices%20Agaisnt%20Haitian-Decedned%20Domincans)

The value of the amendments to the 1987 Constitution for this segment of the Diaspora is potentially transformative. Many of the people rendered stateless through a diametrically opposite, parallel constitutional, legislative and judicial process in the Dominican Republic are now Haitian citizens. Via the amendments, the Haitian State has claimed them as its citizens. Consequently, the Haitian State bears some measure of responsibility for their protection.

So, knowledge is the first step to integration. The Haitian Diaspora needs widespread formal communication of their new rights and potential roles in Haiti, including property ownership, voting policies and procedures. Those of us abreast of any issue as it develops must make national and international efforts to inform the Diaspora.

Very few nations have been able to achieve integration without organized knowledge of the spaces their Diaspora occupy, both geographic and with regards to human capital. That said, The Diaspora should assist and support the Haitian Government in immediate efforts to create an organized database of Haitians living abroad. China, Taiwan, Mexico, and Pakistan all began their integration strategies with national and international initiatives to learn about the skills and generational status of their Diasporas. China has used this data to diversify its integration strategies, reach entrepreneurs, high school and college students, all with distinct, highly organized strategies.

We do not claim monopolies on knowledge, whether of this issue or the overall correct line. Of course, there are many roads to the future we envision. Therefore, we recognize that the process of advancing long term work such as this requires that activists come together around a common mission / objective, major strategic steps, tactics, stubborn perseverance and commitment.

Certainly, we all may understand our responsibilities differently and may perform them at different levels. So, we must always take into consideration that we are not all similarly situated, recognize our own assets and limitations, listen to each other's perspectives, and find points on which we can collaborate and build on each other's work to achieve a prosperous, stable and safe Haiti for all Haitians.

In the light of the above, we can conclude that it was like yesterday the 1987 Constitution, via its Article 13, deprived Haitians who have become citizens of their host countries of their Haitian Nationality. Furthermore, Article 15 stated: "Dual Haitian and foreign nationality is in no case permitted".

But today, thanks to the hard work and determination of the Haitian Congress to Fortify Haiti (HCFH), and the Haitian Congress for Civic Engagement (HC-PAC), in collaboration of course with friends and allies, both in Haiti and in the Diaspora, the 1987 Constitution has been amended, Article 13 and 15 are history, Dual / Multi-nationality became a reality, at least, in theory. For, as a result of the Amendments, we, in the Diaspora, supposedly have regained our civil and political rights. In fact, one of these fundamental rights is the voting right. But, since the promulgation of the amendments:

1. Up to now, no effort on the part of the Government has been made to set up a mechanism by which Haitians living abroad would be able to exercise their right to vote;
2. No effort on the part of the Parliament has been made either to work on accompanying laws clarifying some ambiguities and obscurities related to some of the Articles that were amended;
3. In spite of the new law, ironically, any important Civil Servant suspected of having Dual citizenship is subject to scrutiny;

4. The Ministry of the Haitians Living Abroad (MHAVE) became somewhat dysfunctional or took a leave of absence from responding to the needs of the Diaspora.

Nevertheless, the Amendments to the 1987 Constitution was without a doubt a positive step in the right direction. It is the result of a concerted effort within the Diaspora that, through systematic work, convinced our Lawmakers to transcend themselves and vote in favor of Dual nationality. We have won a battle. We gained a percentage of our fundamental rights. However, a significant disparity remains still among Haiti's sons and daughters, among those who are allowed to exercise their civil and political rights entirely and those with limitations. In other words, the Amendments handed us a glass half way full. It is up to us, in the Diaspora, to continue the struggle by unifying ourselves and doubling our effort to obtain the other half which is due to us so, like our brothers and sisters in Haiti, we can become fully fledged citizens.

We will never be satisfied until we achieve our goal.

Lastly, we have no quote from Jean-Baptiste Point Du Sable, a Haitian pioneer and first non-native settler of our great city. Daniel H Burnham, a brilliant designer and planner who designed the grand scheme of Chicago's lakefront, may suffice. Burnham echoed Victor Hugo in a way that captures the work we have set out to do. He once said:

**“Make no little plans, they may have no magic to stir men's blood and probably will not be realized. Make big plan; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram, once recorded, will not die, but will be a living thing long after we are gone”.**

Fundamentally, the HCFH and HC-PAC originated with the premise that we must first fortify Haitians in the Diaspora in order to then fortify Haiti. The reintegration of the Diaspora hinges on the unification of the Diaspora, not necessarily physically and geographically, but spiritually and politically.

Essentially, we all share the same dream, which is to have a country that is prosperous, stable and safe. We cannot, for any reason, let that dream die. It is always good to dream well. But, it is even better to be effective in action. So, brothers and sisters, once and for all, let us join together to build that solid and indispensable foundation which is solidarity between the least and the more privileged among us to advance our dream. Neither the Haitian State in general, nor any single administration in particular, can accomplish for us what we must accomplish for ourselves. State power is not the key to our integration; unity is.

**UNITY MAKES US STRONG, NOT VICE VERSA**