

The Haitian Media Outreach Project will utilize Haitian radio and television to inform and educate the Haitian community on John Kerry's message and political agenda. and The most vital and far reaching medium of communication in Haiti is radio. Printed news and television are not the norm for Haitians seeking information both general, and specific. Creole, essentially a spoken idiom until its recent induction as the official language of Haiti, was not taught in Haitian schools. Many immigrants arriving in the united States are illiterate not only in English, but in Creole as well. As radio in Haiti is the primary source of news and information, so sets the stage for the Haitian community living in the Diaspora, those Haitians living outside of Haiti.

Everything from healthcare information, parenting, safe sex and politics is discussed on Haitian radio. Call in shows are popular, and the community uses this as a tool for an open dialogue. Radio has become a tool for disseminating information to the marginalized, helping them to empower themselves through education, healthcare, and political liberation. Many popular radio hosts in Haiti have taken up political causes that have eventually led to their assassination. In a round about way, these radio hosts have become political martyrs and somehow enabled radio to become the "sanctioned" medium for information. Radio talk hosts and DJ's have become powerful influences over their listeners, guiding them in their political directions by providing information on candidates and their platforms. Quite often, poll workers have heard, "Who is Pimon Book voting for?" (a popular radio personality) when entering the polling stations.

For the specifics of this paper, I will address Miami Dade County and its 95,000 plus Haitian citizens. For a breakdown of population in municipality please see attached graph. For a breakdown of the State to State Haitian population see attached graph. Working together with local Haitian American NGO's in the Miami-Dade community, an outreach platform will be created. These NGO's work directly with the radio stations in Miami-Dade County, and specifically with the radio talk hosts, to convey the message of John Kerry to the Haitian people. These will not be radio "spots", but actual discussions of policy, interviews with local and national leaders addressing issues both specific and non specific to the Haitian community, and

"President Bush did Haiti a huge favor by removing Aristide."

This statement exemplifies the feeling in the Haitian community relating to allegations that GWB forcibly removed President Aristide by "kidnapping him" on 29 February 2004 and flying him into exile in Central African Republic (Aristide is now in Jamaica).

While there is no concrete evidence of this "kidnapping;" follow-on statements by JFK and actions by members of the CBC have fueled a belief that GWB did in fact do Haitians a "favor."

JFK's campaign issued the following statement regarding Aristide: *"The current crisis in Haiti is yet another example of Bush Administration neglect in our own hemisphere. Instead of working to support democratic institutions for the past three years, this Admin-*

istration has seemed intent on bringing about regime change by encouraging the opposition and cutting off aid from the United States...

While most political observers note that JFK's posture is purely political in the context of Iraq and Afghanistan, many Haitians are relieved that Aristide – who is viewed as corrupt and the architect of their country's continuing despair – has been removed from power.

It is generally viewed that JFK is taking his “marching orders” from the CBC. As noted by many, the CBC's defense of Aristide is being driven by financial gain rather than any overriding principles.

The *Miami Herald* reported that almost \$5 million has been spent by the Aristide government on lobbyists and lawyers, including payments to former CBC leader ex-Congressman Ron Dellums' firm, since 2000 (“Aristide spent millions to lobby,” 20 March 2004). There are rumors (albeit unsubstantiated) that Congresswoman Maxine Waters' husband was on the Aristide payroll and \$1.5 million was donated to Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition (again unsubstantiated).

The ire directed at the CBC was summarized aptly as follows: *“They [United States] should not impose a third rate democracy on Haiti.”*

The vacuum now brewing in the Haitian community can be exploited by the GWB campaign. Evidence exists they are underway – the GOP has appointed a Haitian campaign chairman in Miami-Dade and recently held a community meeting (which was by invitation only) to solicit recommendations for USAID actions toward “rebuilding” Haiti.

The consensus is the Democratic Party is alienating and taking the Haitian vote in Florida for granted. But the damage is repairable if the Democratic Party and JFK are swift in reaching out to community leaders and beginning a dialogue of understanding. The Kerry campaign and the Democratic Party (and its myriad of affiliated organizations) must not take the Haitian vote for granted. Time is of the essence.

While there has been damage following the removal of Aristide, we must move quickly to **earn** this vital vote if we are going to be successful in Florida and successful in defeating George W. Bush.

It is important to remember that Haitians share other deep concerns beyond the future of their country. They face very real problems – as all Americans do – when it come to health care, jobs, education, crime, etc. JFK campaign should advertise within the Haitian community in South Florida the obvious differences between his vision and ideas as compared to GWB.

Aside from voter registration projects currently underway, the Democratic Party must prepare an education effort for Haitian voters. It has been pointed out in the past that Democrats have conducted these efforts aimed all black voters without

making distinctions for Haitians. A Haiti-specific program should be deployed in English and Creole educating voters about the election and how to participate.

From the June issue of Caribbean Today, a Miami monthly paper.

HAITIAN AMERICANS AN EMERGING POLITICAL POWER
BY PATRICK SMIKLE
CT WRITER

In one of his first moves after being formally installed as mayor of North Miami on May 25, attorney at law Frank Wolland reached out to the city's Haitian community.

"The Haitian community needs to come and participate in our city government by coming to town hall meetings," Wolland told journalists. It was the third time in less than a fortnight that Wolland was openly seeking to build bridges with Haitian Americans.

On May 19, the day after he narrowly defeated Haitian-American businessman Josaphat "Joe" Celestin in the election for mayor of North Miami, Wolland was on Creole radio. "I will welcome Haitians to the city boards," he said. His reaching out even extended to Joe Celestin. "I publicly offer him to come to work together with me in the city," he said.

The day before the poll Wolland spent more than an hour on Haitian talk radio. That appearance had marked a change in Wolland's campaign strategy; a change that some commentators said was dictated by pragmatism. "It is an acknowledgment of the growing political assertiveness of Florida's Haitian community," one observer, asking not to be named, told Caribbean Today.

It is an assertiveness that Guyanese-born political scientist Ivelaw Griffith says arises from socioeconomic necessity. He says Haitians are relatively worse off than other immigrant groups in South Florida and thus feel a compulsion to do something about their situation. In addition, says the Florida International University lecturer, "you've got the stark racist attitudes of not only Southern Florida people but even the federal government, reflected in the treatment of Haitians over immigration."

He was referring to the exclusion of Haitians from immigration relief measures passed by Congress to assist thousands of Central Americans and Eastern Europeans.

Their initial exclusion from immigration relief had galvanized Haitians in the United States to do something about their situation, Griffith said. "One way of doing this is to get representation."

Perhaps the first concrete sign of this new political assertiveness was seen in last November's state and municipal elections when six Haitian-Americans ran for seats on school boards, the state House of Representatives and the state Senate. While none of these candidates was successful, each got enough votes to attract the attention of the media and political observers.

One of these candidates was Joe Celestin.

It was no surprise when Celestin filed papers to run for mayor of North Miami. As mayor of this "dormitory city" of 50,000 residents, he would be the most important Haitian-American elected official in Florida, indeed the most powerful Caribbean-American politician in the Sunshine State.

It is estimated that at least 3,000 of North Miami's 18,000 registered voters are Haitian Americans. While specifically targeting the Haitian community through Creole talk radio, Celestin also went after the black American and Hispanic votes, estimated to be about 7,000 and 3,000, respectively.

He declared himself "The candidate with a plan."

"I am the only one with a vision," he said as he campaigned on a platform of economic empowerment and a pledge to end alleged discrimination in city hiring. Referring to Celestin's unsuccessful run for the state Senate last year, opponents dismissed him as a "carpetbagger" who wanted political power wherever he could get it.

In polling on May 11, Celestin had received 2,263 votes (45.3 percent); ahead of Frank Wolland, who got 1,623 (32.5 percent); Anthony Caserta, who got 855; and Ted Ravelo who polled only 254 votes. However, having failed to get the 50 percent-plus-one needed to become mayor, Celestin was forced into a runoff with Wolland. "I wanted to take it outright," Celestin told reporters. He expressed confidence he would win the runoff.

With many commentators all but declaring Celestin the winner, believing the large bloc of Haitian-American residents would make this a reality, Wolland complained: "People need to decide now if ethnic bloc voting is the city's future."

The comment drew sharp responses from several quarters. Jamaican-born broadcast journalist Winston Barnes said

Haitian-Americans were doing only what Cuban Americans had done to gain and consolidate their political power in South Florida. He cited Celestin's initial success as an example of what Caribbean-American people in Florida could achieve through organization and unity. He also referred to "a tendency among Jamaicans in particular to put down Haitian immigrants rather than unite with them around common concerns."

Barnes' comments led to a spirited debate on his Open Line radio call in program, with most of the callers agreeing with his position. Wolland, in the meanwhile, embarked on a new strategy. He reached out to the Haitian community.

In the May 18 runoff, Wolland won with 3,483 votes (53 percent) to Celestin's 3,045 votes (47 per cent). The additional week of campaigning between the two polls was vitriolic and often racial.

Celestin's campaign workers said they were told by persons in the Wolland camp that they were not "real Americans" and "should get back on the boat."

Wolland's campaign workers said they too were subjected to racial slurs by Celestin campaign workers.

There were also allegations of voter harassment and planned electoral chicanery. The Florida Department of Law Enforcement, the State Attorney's Office and the Miami-Dade County Elections Department sent officers to monitor proceedings at the runoff.

In the end Wolland's ability to raise money made the difference, pro-Celestin observers say, noting that Wolland was operating with a campaign fund of \$66,000, compared to Celestin's \$4,000.

But they say they are encouraged by several aspects of the two polls. In some eyes, Celestin is to be commended for "waking up North Miami politics." These observers note that 28.2 percent of registered voters cast ballots on May 11 and 36 percent on May 18. The traditional turnout is around 15 percent.

They say his campaign crossed ethnic lines, winning support among black Americans and Hispanics and secured the endorsement of no less a political figure than Florida Governor Jeb Bush.

Part of the emergence of Haitian-American political power is Haitians' constituting the fastest-growing ethnic group in North Miami, and they are increasingly becoming naturalized citizens (10,036 in 1996) and thus voters.

Observers point to one development that went almost unnoticed: While the media focused overwhelmingly on the Celestin/Wolland mayoral contest, another Haitian-American, Ossmann Desir, was elected to the five-member North Miami city council. Councilman Desir is the only black member of that body.

To them, all this bodes well for Haitian-American involvement in Florida's multilayered political system.

At Radio Soleil we use the "G" Word a lot. With a captive listener base of more than 600,000 Haitians spread across the tri-state area, a "Guaranteed" Audience is what the people at Radio Soleil enjoy and offer. As a pioneer of Haitian-American radio journalism broadcasting 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in 3 languages, Radio Soleil transmits its own sub-signal from Brooklyn to receivers as far away as Philadelphia. With 5 hour-long news programs, hourly news updates and 3 two hour-long weekly news analysis magazines, the station helps its eager listeners remain the best informed segment of the Caribbean market.

It isn't just the news that allows Radio Soleil the luxury of A "Guaranteed" Audience. The special relationships developed during "Call-IN" Shows and multiple services to the community have led to true loyalty; a loyalty which is the public side of a relationship carried on in the home, the office, the cab, the restaurant, the park or anywhere the listeners care to touch the link to their culture. Radio Soleil is the electronic gate Haitian personalities use to reach the Haitian public, and it is also the place to begin when you wish to tap into the \$2.5 billion economic force that hard-working Haitian-Americans have become.

As if having a full roster of the most important and prestigious Haitian radio personalities in America to give our listeners the timeliest and most accurate coverage of events in the community was not enough, Radio Soleil remains a showcase for Haitian music. This music has burst onto the international scene with growing popularity. Teen hours, game shows, religious programming and cultural critique round out the dynamic mix for which our listeners purchase special receivers.

When Radio Soleil "Guarantees" it, you have the comfort of knowing that 1.5 Million people with a shared pride, awareness and dedication get their information from the same source, "Vraiment " we take the "G" word for granted at Radio Soleil D'Haiti!

Among the Haitians of Brooklyn, radio is probably the single biggest source of news and information, eclipsing the various Haitian newspapers. Reverend Nicolas and Garry Pierre-Pierre agree that this is because of the relatively low literacy rate among Haitian immigrants. Using a license for a station in Asbury Park, New Jersey, which in recent years has gained a concentration of Haitians, Nicolas himself began broadcasting in Creole from Brooklyn using a relay device, but the Federal Communications Commission made him stop. The three remaining Haitian radio outlets in Brooklyn all use sub-carrier frequencies to broadcast, meaning that, like the Sinocast broadcasts, they require a specially adapted radio.

His father Jude speaks English less fluently than he does Haiti Creole, but he has the same cultural experiences from back in Haiti that binds many New York Haitians to Haiti and explains why many have not assimilated into the New York community. Jeffrey Joseph, who came here when he was just 2 years old, does not attempt to hasten the assimilation, but strengthen what he considers to be an important counterbalance.

“Many of our listeners are still caught up in politics in Haiti because of the situation we grew up in,” says Jeffrey Joseph. “The changing of the President was always big news. We talked about it; we were affected by it; we became attached to it. A large percentage of our programming is therefore about politics in Haiti. Whenever we have such a program on the air, all the lines are busy. On the other hand, some younger Haitians having moved to the United States tend to throw away their culture. You don’t have to throw away your culture just because you have become an American citizen. Deep inside, you are Haitian.

Radyo Pa Nou plays American jazz, American country music, French music – the *chansonnet francais*; and we play our Haitian music, *Kompa*. Our programming focus is also to educate our young people about our culture, and to care about what’s happening back home in Haiti; because if we don’t, our country will perish.”

This is not merely a social dissertation or political philosophy of a young college student who just happens to be the Vice President of a young radio station. Rather, it is the programming philosophy of all four radio stations broadcasting from East Flatbush.

Information Society in Haiti: mechanisms and conditions for technological empowerment

Gotson Pierre
July, 2003

In Haiti, the concept of the information society is already part of the public speech. That is a direct consequence of having in perspective the World Summit on the Information Society to be held in Geneva, in December 2003, and in Tunis, in 2005.

Somehow, the media echoes the happenings that encompass the process of preparation of the summit conferences and refer themselves sometimes to reflections, as a result of meetings in Haiti or overseas. Sometimes, they also question themselves about the attitude of the country authorities that seem utterly inactive as far as the preparation of these summit conferences is concerned.

This timid approach from some media to the subject of the information society is, to a great extent, an outcome of a sensitization work performed by some groups or institutions of the communication sector or NICT (newer information and communication technologies).

Nevertheless, if one looks at what has happened over the last thirty years, it can be seen that the problem of communication and information has been a crucial issue for the Haitian society, poorly literately and one in which dominates the oral culture. In this context, the radio acquired a capital importance during the last decades. More than 150 radio stations are operating today in the country, among which some are communitarian radio networks.

The Haitians have developed a culture of listening to the radio.[2] Radio remains as the media that reaches the greatest amount of public, not only for literacy related reasons, but also due to the weak development of electric and telecom infrastructure,[3] the uneven geography and the degree of isolation of local villages.

Despite energy difficulties, television gets greater importance in the cities and competes against radio, mainly at night. Twenty-five stations operate or have authorization to do so in the country.

The written press has a rather poor development, due to the high percentage of illiteracy and economic precariousness. The official daily, *L'Union* and a private one, *Le Nouvelliste*, are regularly edited in the capital city; but over the last decades many daily or weekly publications disappeared.

Three press agencies (Agence Haïtienne de Presse, Haïti Press Network y AlterPresse) operate uninterrupted in the country since several years, feed the radio, television and the daily journals and benefit from the on line diffusion.

In general, perhaps for a fashion effect, there is an increasing trend in the Haitians media to developing on line contents, that in the case of the radio, television and for the daily journals. Some radios, like Radio Vision 2000 and Radio Solidarité, publish directly in Internet. Some others like Radio Métropole and Signal FM have information web sites, and even some have web pages as window sites.[4]

The television web sites are much less frequent. Attempts to regularly feed an Internet space by the National Television have failed. Out of our two dairy newspapers, the official diversifies its presence through Internet and two Haitian weekly magazines edited from the Diaspora (Haïti-Progrès and Haïti en Marche) outreach their editions by means of web sites.[5]

However, it does not seem that in the majority of cases the communication policy takes into consideration all dimensions of the information society phenomenon. "Informatics hardware within the majority of radio stations is poor. It is unusual that staff have computers available. In general Internet access depends on personal initiatives of journalists and entertainers." [6]

Anyhow, it is becoming a continual reference to Internet as source of news, both domestic and international. Many chronics are specifically based on Internet contents or are referred to multimedia. Sometimes, whole programs are dedicated to this problem.

Beyond Access

In addition to the media, despite the low availability level of resources in Haiti, Internet is playing an increasingly significant role in the life of many people. Many a person asks himself how would it perform without Internet.

It was during early 90s that Haitians discovered computer-mediated communication, and electronic mail prevailed during the three years of the bloody military coup d'état of September 1991. In 1993, REHRED was born. And in 1996, the first chances of access to navigation.[7]

A dozen of private Internet Service Providers (ISP) currently offers Internet access, either by dial-up connection or by radio waves. A survey published by RDDH in 2002, there were 7000 Internet users in the country. These could be institutions, families or physical individuals, with some 23% of the share being academic, 23% industrial, 23% home users, 19% commercial telecenters and 13% small commercial ISP. [8]

The majority of internauts (mainly professionals, public administration executive staff, private sector, non governmental organizations, international organizations, students, faculty and journalists) live in Port Prince, but country cities are beginning to get access.

The most important phenomenon within the last years is the continuous creation of telecenters with Internet access to those who are not able to pay for a computer or connection fees. Almost 85% of telecenters are based in the metropolitan area.[9]

Being the case of domestic access, institutional or through access centers, it's being observed that research, emailing and files interchange needs are fulfilled. But the application with the greater impact is telephony. "Telephony is the first service among the more used in telecenters, with 62,6%, even with a cost 6 times greater", [10] shows the RDDH Report.

A journalist was asking himself recently if these users could be considered internauts. In a more general way, the question should be to find out what is the Haitian user's attitude towards the ICT, to what extent he/she feels consciously integrated to information society and what critical path could take with respect to the currently processes going on. At this time it is not possible to answer these questions, due to the fact that there has not been a survey or study aimed at them.

What is true is that there exists a great need to educate on the critical approach of communication processes, both in the professional media and the great public in general.

As it can be seen, the central element that lacks in Haiti, related to information society, is an active attitude towards ICT. The risk is the Haitians using the newer media, as they were used to with their antecessors: as mere receptors.

Radio and ICT, a formula for technological empowerment

A sector that, in the Haitian experience, has proved that people can shift from a passive to an active role is communitarian radio.

Nine years ago a relatively important movement of communitarian radio was born in Haiti, at a time when the constitutional legitimacy was being returned, after the military coup d'état of September 1991. Was a time of openness and empowerment of the public voice, what favored the emergence of many communitarian radio stations.

Currently more than forty, collectives of democratic and popular organizations often own these radio stations. They operate in cities, small towns and villages favoring, in many cases, the participation of the local population in the public debate, sometimes, in the material and financial management of the radio stations, that transform thus into true own achievements for the communities.

But it cannot be denied that, unfortunately, several of these experiences, faced with the challenges of the political situation as to economic and organizational problems, were unsuccessful with effects opposite to what was expected.

However, originating from the potentiality that showed some of these projects was possible to put forward the idea of fostering a combination of media and informatics and radio phonic devices in order to enable underserved sectors have ICT access. [11]

The radios, equipped with telematic resources, would play thus, somehow, roles as the ones assumed by telecenters. But even better than those, its diffusion media would allow them to reach vast populations, offering practical services, such as messaging, and acting as channels for educational efforts with respect to the challenges of communication.

All players of the ICT sector in Haiti do not share this idea. Some think that in a numeric literacy perspective, it is absolutely necessary to empower the population to directly use the technology and in some way or another people should realize that in future Internet will become part of their daily lives.[12]

On the other hand, professor Harry Regis, head of the Communication Department of the Humana Sciences School, considers, on the contrary, that much is to be gained if the process of radio and Internet integration were promoted, which would favor a better lever of information to local populations, given the accessibility of the radio.[13] It would remain to organize the process of feeding Internet and of the global network, by local populations.

Obstacles to overcome

The professor Regis sees two obstacles that interpose to the development of ICT in Haiti: the way of introduction of these technologies and the structure of Haitian society.

The fact that Internet development in Haiti corresponds to initiatives almost exclusively commercial, keeps away, firstly, the underserved sectors, since it is assumed beforehand that they might not have access. Secondly, the elitist orientation of education and of society in general strengthen the idea that technology is something reserved to whom have certain degree of education.

Just these arguments make necessary a demystification of technology. Professor Régis thinks that, in this context, the socioeducative Haitian system is one of the mayor obstacles that prevent that the majority of population will become technologically empowered.

On the other hand, certain academic sectors of the country think that it is essential that the discourse of the communication problematic most not be limited to the journalistic worries. It is true that the current situation of the media, subject to and endless pressure from the political sector, is too precarious, with systematic attacks against journalists and newspapers.[14] But when raising the question of communication it should not be avoided the question of the propagation of ideas and experiences, and the access to knowledge for a democratic, socioeconomic and cultural development.

In the current context, the political framework implies problems, to the extent that it has not been defined a proper policy, leaving things to some *laisser-faire*. In such circumstances, what responsibility has a State that is unconcerned to the common wellbeing and only worries about keeping itself in power?

All in all, as Professor Raymond Noël, of the Sciences School,[15] points out, in the perspective of an information society based on the ability of Haitian people to communicate, it cannot be overlooked the transformation of structures that promote ignorance and exclusion.

Radio Tropicale is the oldest of the four Haitian radio stations in Brooklyn; although Garry La Roc had made an earlier attempt to set up the Ethnic

Haitians Turn Around a Town

An interesting thing happened in the weeks preceding the September, 2002 Democratic primary for the 86th District State Representative race in Delray Beach, Florida. Candidates made house to house visits in predominantly Haitian neighborhoods. As they walked the sidewalks, they passed telephone poles on which flyers in Creole exhorted local residents to go out and vote. Sample ballots written in Creole were being handed out by local non-profits that work with the community, preparing Haitian-American voters for a first in this district: Creole would be one of the languages to appear on the ballot (see ballot at right). This sort of attention was certainly something that the Haitian community in Delray Beach was not accustomed to.

However, for anyone who had witnessed Delray's meteoric rise out of the economic doldrums throughout the early to middle 1990s, this development was no surprise. By

2002, Delray Beach had become the US town with the largest percentage Haitian population in the United States. More than just sheer numbers, the Haitian community also grew geographically, economically, and socially; extending itself while maintaining a relatively low profile in the community it has adopted as its own. This growth has paralleled the incredible economic turnaround of Delray Beach as a municipality. It represents the awakening of a community which for a long time has lived in the shadow of its larger neighbor in Miami. The impressive growth has also brought about some strains within the Haitian community and in the community's interactions with the other residents of Delray Beach. These are challenges which the maturing community is ready to take on.

Despite their relatively low profile, the Haitian role in this transformation can not be ignored. Haitian residents, who are oftentimes homeowners, stabilized what had been a volatile setting. With the accelerated growth of the economy in the mid-90s they were able to grow economically as a community. With their increased numbers they were able to combat the predatory service providers of the mid-1980s and establish community structures to provide the services they needed at normal rates. They are realizing in 2002 that the fruit of these efforts is the newly found political power which they did not even know they had. And yet despite these accomplishments, like most immigrant groups, their hearts tug them in the direction of their homeland.

The Quest for Political Representation

While the Toussaint Louverture High School is an important symbol for the Haitian Community in Delray Beach, and the soon to be opened museum will add another reason for pride, the Haitian community is in fact not represented by one of its own at any level of government. This is increasingly proving to be a hindrance to the goals of the community. Despite the heavy campaigning for Haitian votes in the Democratic primary for the State legislator's seat, Haitians are finding that their voices are not being heard at the municipal level. This is most apparent in the economic arena.

The Voiceless Backbone of the Economy

Haitians, employed in the service sector jobs related to the tourist industry and to a lesser extent the agricultural work on the farms west of Interstate 95, form the backbone of the local economy. Haitian businesses are prevalent in the commercial districts that extend through the neighborhood of Osceola Park. Despite the proximity of these businesses to the downtown artist section called Pineapple Grove, however, many Haitian business owners complain that their streets have not been beautified in the same manner as the surrounding downtown area. And indeed, when walking from beautiful Atlantic Avenue down SE 3rd Street one cannot help but notice the gradual degradation of the sidewalks and general level of cleanliness. Haitian business owners desire the same treatment as other downtown business owners, but wonders whether this can be accomplished without Haitian representation in the hallways and offices of local government.

They will most certainly need their voice to be represented as the downtown revitalization continues and developers begin to start eyeing property in their Osceola Park neighborhood. In this regard, says high school principal Joseph Bernadel, the example of what happened in North Miami, where the elected mayor is [Haitian-American Jo-](#)

[seph Celestin](#), is important. For Bernadel, North Miami demonstrates that areas with highly concentrated Haitian populations can elect members of their own community to seats of great responsibility. Bernadel has expressed an interest in running for elected office in Delray Beach, and with his success as Principal of the Toussaint Louverture High School, he has begun to build a constituency of voters from all sections of the Haitian community in Delray Beach

Challenges Facing the Community's Quest

A challenge facing any aspiring Haitian political leader in Delray, however, is the reality that what seems to outsiders to be a homogeneous group of immigrants is actually made up of different subgroups divided by age, geography and how long they have lived in the U.S. Within this framework, two challenges will loom large within the Delray Haitian community in the coming years: the interaction of younger generations with older generations and the interaction of increasingly Americanized Haitians with more recent arrivals.

When asked about the interaction among Haitian students at his high school, Principal Bernadel describes the inherent differences between those who have just arrived and those who have been here for 10 years. "The kid who just got here three weeks ago listens to Haitian konpa music whereas the one who has been here ten years listens to hip-hop. Usually they do not interact much."

This division between old and new immigrants is clearly manifest at churches, which are often the venue of activities that can bring the two groups together. In many cases, however, that does not occur, however, as newly arrived Haitians attend a Creole service whereas those who arrived earlier go to an English service. These types of divisions can also separate first generation community members who have more of a connection to Haiti from second-generation members who were either born in the US or arrived in the first wave, at a young age.

Like any immigrant community, the Haitian community of Delray Beach is coping with the challenges and side effects of assimilation into a new culture. Among some in the community, there is a tendency to focus strongly on Haiti while neglecting the task of assimilation in their new 'home.' For others, more strongly demonstrated among those who have the deepest roots in Delray, the pattern is almost reversed. There is no question in Delray, however, about the loss of Haitian links and identity. As long as Haitians continue to migrate to Delray Beach and those already there continue to venerate their heritage, the community's links with the homeland will not disappear.

A Community Reaching the Strength of Adolescence

The Delray Beach Haitian community appears to have reached an important moment in its growth that is somewhat akin to that of an adolescent coming to terms with his/her own newfound strength. The community has grown to very large absolute and relative numbers. It has the largest Haitian percentage population of an entire community of any place in the United States! As it becomes increasing Haitian-American, that population has the power in its hands to elect officials that can represent its interests. That population also has in place the institutions that can welcome and assimilate new arrivals from Haiti.

More than anything else most people in the community appear to believe that the biggest change in the community over the past twenty years has been linked to the rising levels of education among its members. As stated by Siliana Joseph, a student at the Toussaint Louverture High School, "Before, Haitian youth used to arrive here and go directly to work, but now they go to school." The strong desire among Haitian immigrants to afford the best in education for their children has been aided in Delray Beach by such institutions as the Toussaint Louverture High School. As increasing numbers of graduates from that school and others turn their attention to education beyond high school strong signs of the community's maturity emerge, boding well for its future

Palm cards misled Haitian voters into voting for Bush, activist charges

By DAVID CÁZARES and ELLIS BERGER Sun-Sentinel

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The Federal Bureau of Investigation is probing allegations some voters were misled by information handed out at the polls and may have been tricked into casting ballots for the opposing party's candidates, a Miami-Dade County elections official said Monday.

Ivy Korman, who is the Miami-Dade supervisor of elections' liaison with law enforcement, said she spoke with the FBI on Monday.

Korman said the investigation will likely center on the so-called "palm cards" that are routinely handed out by campaign workers. The cards list the names of endorsed candidates and the number voters should punch to select them, she said.

The FBI is looking into whether unscrupulous campaign operatives may have given voters the wrong punch number for a particular slate, Korman said.

Haitian activist Margaret Armand of Plantation, who has worked on the Gore campaign and was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention, said Haitians without "a command of the English language vote only by number."

She said she saw palm cards being handed out at Precinct 153 in Miami-Dade County that gave Bush's number on the Miami-Dade ballot, not Gore's, but were being touted as a vote for Gore. People handing out the cards also said they were campaigning for Gore.

"I feel like people were taken advantage of," Armand said. "They wanted to confuse the Haitian people. They knew they were going to vote for Gore. The only way to (prevent) that was to change the number and confuse us. Ninety-nine percent of Haitians vote for Democrats."

Daniella Henry, Haitian American Community Council executive director, said Haitian voters in Palm Beach County were confused by the ballot, but she has not heard anyone complain that they were handed a palm card misdirecting them to vote for Bush.

Joe Geller, chairman of the Miami-Dade Democratic Party, said he had not heard about misleading palm cards. "We're going to look into this," Geller said. "We'll start our own investigation."

Palm cards can be an important factor in an election because some voters rely on them much as others might on newspaper endorsements, former Florida Secretary of State Jim Smith said. Smith said it's common for people to take them into the voting booth.

Ari Fleischer, a spokesman for the Bush campaign, said GOP election workers had nothing to do with misleading palm cards.

"In a race in which there has been nothing but confusion and chaos in the recount, the last thing the Democrats should do is compound it with baseless allegations," Fleischer said.

The FBI spokesman in Miami did not return calls seeking comment Monday. Officials at the Justice Department would not comment specifically on the allegation. The department said most election irregularities likely are matters for state and local authorities, but federal authorities are interested in possible civil rights violations.

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James Auffant, the president of the Hispanic-American Voter's League, and Marliene Bastien, the executive director of the Haitian Women of Miami, testified at the Commission briefing. They reaffirmed the Commission's finding that language accessibility was a large problem during the 2000 presidential election and continues to be a problem in central and southern Florida.^[25] Unfortunately, the Florida Election Reform Act of 2001 fails to address language accessibility issues. Furthermore, it was apparent from the testimony of the witnesses at the Commission briefing that while some counties have shown initiative with regard to language assistance, many counties are slow to implement reform measures that would ensure that limited-English-proficient voters receive proper language assistance.^[26] Mr. Auffant added that the county supervisors of elections in central Florida have taken the position that unless they are notified by the Department of Justice that they are required to provide language assistance, they do not have to take any measures to provide language assistance to limited-English-proficient voters. These counties appear to believe that they are providing language assistance by placing Spanish literature at polling places. Still, this approach disregards the fact that not all voters who speak Spanish are literate.^[27]

In addition, Marliene Bastien testified that even though the election reforms are supposed to be implemented before the next election, with only about 80 days remaining until the next election in Miami, no concrete steps have been taken to remedy the problems that the Haitian American voters faced in the 2000 presidential election.^[28] She explained that the new voting machines in Miami-Dade County have instructions in English and Spanish but do not include Creole.^[29] Ms. Bastien also indicated that while the county is considering adding Creole instructions to the new voting machines, she still sees many potential problems with the new voting machines.^[30] She emphasized that the Miami-Dade County Board of Commissioners passed ordinances in 1999 and 2000 mandating that Creole ballot translation be made available; yet, the new voting machines do not include Creole translation, and it is a major concern for the Haitian American community.^[31] Ms. Bastien stated that while the supervisor of elections in Miami-Dade County has repeatedly expressed the need for a lot of work in the Haitian community and his willingness to meet with the community, he has yet to take any action that indicates a willingness to actually address the issue.^[32] She added that in light of all the problems the voters experienced in the 2000 presidential election, more should be done in preparation for the September election to train and bring information to the

voters. Nevertheless, she is concerned that there has not been much effort by the county.[\[33\]](#)

The fact that the Florida Election Reform Act does not address language accessibility appears to indicate a lack of sensitivity to the issue and a failure of leadership by state officials. While the witnesses at the Commission briefing testified that the state government has made little effort to address the problem of language accessibility, some counties have taken the initiative. Local election officials in counties with sufficient budgets are implementing their own measures to accommodate individuals with limited English proficiency. Several counties, including Miami-Dade and Palm Beach counties, are now using new touch screen voting technology that is programmed for use in multiple languages. However, as articulated by Mr. Auffant and Ms. Bastien, county governments can take even more proactive measures to provide proper language assistance, and poll workers who speak Spanish and Creole must be actively recruited.

Danielle Romer doesn't normally speak on the air, but this Saturday evening Yves Fontaine, the regular host of the Creole-language talk show she produces on WKAT-AM (1360), is indisposed. So she finds herself sitting at the control board with a mike and a telephone. Her too-big earphones are uncomfortable, and she's distracted by an occasional audio glitch. But the telephone stays lit the whole hour, and Romer can't get to all the calls coming in from Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties.

The show, An Nou Koze (Let's Talk), is unique in the lively and vital world of Haitian radio in South Florida: It's the only program in Creole that deals exclusively with the topic of domestic violence. This week Romer is talking about how one spots signs of a tendency toward abuse or violence in a relationship. More than half the calls she's answering on the air come from men. And more than half of them are not happy that such a personal and explosive issue is being discussed publicly.

"I'm the man of the house," begins a fairly typical comment. "My wife is supposed to respect me. When I'm talking, she's supposed to sit down and listen to me. Our children have to respect me. That's what keeps our family together, and when you give out information like this it undermines the family unit."

Fontaine, who has showed up to help -- he can't speak owing to an inflamed vocal cord -- lifts his arms in exasperation at the caller's remarks. "Well, I think it's important for each of you to respect the other," Romer replies diplomatically. "The reason we have this show is to bring out as much information as possible so everyone can understand the different aspects of this problem, and that can help the family. Msi bokou pou opinyon-ou."

After a month of Saturdays on the air from 6:00 until 7:00 p.m., An Nou Koze is encountering an unexpectedly spirited response.

"We've been going into some very taboo areas," says the soft-spoken 39-year-old Romer, who came to Miami from Haiti twenty years ago. The mother of an eleven-year-old son, she works as a public service aide for the Metro-Dade Police Department and was recently honored by the county commission for her community activism: Among her other volunteer activities, she also serves on the advisory board for the Black Affairs Department of Metro-Dade's Community Affairs Office, and on the boards of the Mental

Health Association of Dade County, Jackson Memorial Hospital's Rape Treatment Center, and the Homestead-based Haitian Organization of Women. "All the other [Haitian] radio shows are about politics or business or immigration," Romer goes on. "To tell the truth, I really didn't think we'd hear from that many people. At the beginning some people were telling us we wouldn't even be able to fill up a whole hour." Romer has already been invited to guest on other Creole radio talk shows.

The program is part of an education campaign by the Task Force on Domestic Violence in the Haitian Community, a three-year-old group that comprises representatives from Dade's law enforcement, social service, medical, and religious sectors. As chair of the task force's media subcommittee, Romer produces the radio show, but its format is a product of collaboration. The idea was born from discussions at task force meetings, during which the group's Haitian members made it clear that Creole radio should be a part of their educational effort.

Fontaine, a task force member and veteran radio show pro who cohosted a cable TV series about domestic violence and child abuse that Romer produced last year, agreed to host the radio venture. (The television series was called *An Nou Koze* too -- the same name Romer gave to the Creole-language hotline operated by the nonprofit referral and outreach organization she founded, Haitian Support Inc.) A \$4000 grant from the Dade Community Foundation was enough to buy airtime on WKAT for a few months; a second grant application is pending.

"The Haitian population needed more opportunity for awareness and education about domestic violence issues," asserts task force co-chair Linda Dakis, an administrative judge in the domestic violence division of the Dade County courts. "So much of our information was written in English and Spanish, which didn't do the Haitian population any good."

The task force has been overseeing the translation into Creole of legal information and police and court paperwork such as restraining orders, but most activists feel that radio is the best way to reach Haitian immigrants in South Florida. Essentially a spoken idiom, Creole was not taught in local Haitian schools until recently; many immigrants arrive in this country illiterate.

Statistics show a relatively low incidence of domestic violence within the Haitian community. But the numbers are meaningless, task force members argue: Miami's Haitians are a marginalized population that does not interact with the legal system nearly to the degree that other ethnic groups do. Many Haitian women who aren't U.S. residents also fear deportation if they go to the authorities. "The people at the courthouse say there aren't that many Haitians who come in for [restraining orders]," says FIU sociology professor Betty Morrow, the other task force co-chair. "It's not because there isn't a lot of violence; it's that they don't know where to go or what to ask for. And the lack of immigration services is an issue to be dealt with too. Haitian women are doubly powerless, especially if they're convinced by their batterer they won't get a green card if they leave him." (A year-old amendment to the federal Violence Against Women Act does in fact allow married immigrant women to file separately for residency if they can prove abuse.)

Many of the women who call in to the radio show are victims of domestic abuse who have only barely begun to comprehend that what they've been experiencing is illegal

and not, as they've been taught, a fact of life. "Yes!" exclaims one caller, after Romer has gone over several behaviors that usually escalate into future violence. "That's the way my husband was! If I had only known back at the beginning, maybe I wouldn't be in this situation now."

The calls that Romer can't get to on the air are answered anyway, after being routed to Haitian Support Inc. volunteers who are trained in monthly domestic violence workshops that are open to the public. "I get all kinds of calls after the show," reports Mia Pean, a hotline counselor who used to serve as an intake worker for the Dade County courts. "That's when you realize how much violence there is in the Haitian community. It is hidden, like incest -- you're not supposed to talk about it. In Haiti you have to keep your family together no matter what.

"One of the women who called me two weeks ago was suicidal and I've been calling her back every day," Pean goes on. "At one time this person had a spirit; she wanted to live. She was a victim from her first to her fourth husband. She's still with the last one because he's paying the rent, and she has two teenagers who she doesn't want to leave alone to go to work because they'll wind up like her.

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