

FIRST HAITIAN-AMERICAN
"FE M TANDE W"

LET ME HEAR FROM YOU

YOUTH ASSEMBLY
NORTH MIAMI ADULT EDUCATION CENTER

800 N.E. 137 STREET

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 21, 2002

PREPARED BY:

CUBAN HAITIAN REFUGEE INITIATIVE

SANT LA

LESLY PRUDENT

SL.HA.YOU.01

FÈ M TANDE W

LET ME HEAR FROM YOU
YOUTH FORUM



MIAMI-DADE COUNTY MAYOR, HON. ALEX PENELAS
NORTH MIAMI ADULT EDUCATION CENTER
SANT LA
CUBAN HAITIAN REFUGEE INITIATIVE
HAYOT

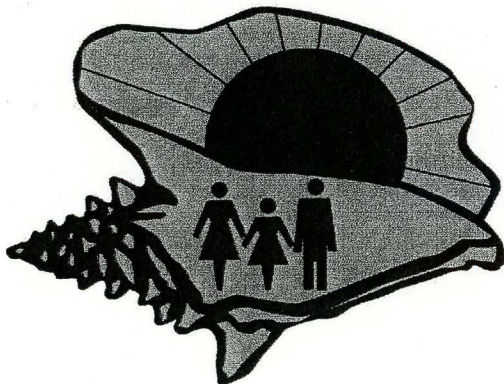
CORDIALLY INVITE YOU TO

THE FIRST ANNUAL HAITIAN AMERICAN YOUTH ASSEMBLY
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2002
NORTH MIAMI ADULT CENTER
800 N.E. 137 STREET
10:00 AM—3:00 PM



ENTERTAINMENT BY
DJ PAZ

GOOD HAITIAN FOOD TO BE SERVED



SPONSORED BY

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY
DOMINO'S PIZZA
SUCA TRANSFER
PIZZA HUT
ISLAND MAGAZINE TV
BON ACCUEIL RESTAURANT

♦ **COME HELP US FIND**
SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS
FACING OUR YOUTH
♦ **BE PART OF THE SOLUTION**
♦ **LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD**

“FE M TANDE W”
Haitian American Youth Assembly
North Miami Senior High School
Saturday, September 21, 2002

REPORT

On Saturday, September 21, 2002 the first Haitian-American Youth Assembly was convened at North-Miami Adult Education Center. The Assembly was an initiative of Miami-Dade County Mayor, Mr. Alex Penelas, in response to increasing issues and problems affecting Haitian-American youths. Emeline Alexis, protocol and community liaison office of the Mayor, spearheaded the effort. She brought together several community partners such as Lesly Prudent, Principal, North Miami Adult Education Center, Eddie Altine, M.S. Ed. Project Director Cuban/Haitian Refugee Initiative, Carline Paul, Executive Director, Haitian-American Youth of Tomorrow, Leonie Hermantin and Marc Lubin, Haitian Neighborhood Center, Sant La. The organizing committee met for the past two months to plan and organize the event.

The rising rate of delinquency, gang membership, and low academic achievement among Haitians and Haitian-American Youths, raises strong concerns in our community. The increasing number of Haitian and Haitian-American youth involved in the criminal justice system has become more and more alarming. Law enforcement sources in areas with large enclaves of Haitians and Haitian-American youths identify the proliferation of violent gangs as the major law enforcement issue in the North Miami, North Miami Beach and Little Haiti communities.

Many prior initiatives focused their attentions and interventions on understanding the needs of parents. They tried to provide supportive services to enable them to cope with the American reality. Very few interventions dealt directly with the affected youth. The purpose of this assembly was to provide Haitian and Haitian-American youth a forum that allows them to discuss issues and define solutions.

The event followed a well outlined format. The plenary session started with the pledge of allegiance and the Haitian National anthem. During that segment, the overall structures of the conference and the breakout sessions were laid out. The plenary group was followed by breakout sessions, where the participants were expected to discuss pertinent topics affecting them. Lunch provided the youth the opportunity to compare notes, enjoy their favored pizza or delectate on the traditional Haitian gourmet sponsored by Bon Accueil Restaurant. The afternoon session was reserved for the reports and discussions of the recommendations made during the breakout sessions.

Approximately 350 youth attended and actively participated in this event. Carline Paul of the Haitian American Youth of Tomorrow (HAYOT) served as mistress of ceremony, and DJ Paz provided the entertainment. Haitian recording artist “Sweet Mickey” provided participants with a very inspirational message about the importance of education. Two state-of-the art computers were rifled away courtesy of City Computers. Additionally, 20 of the participants received calculators, courtesy of North Miami Adult Education Center.

Break Out Sessions

The breakout sessions were held in individual classroom and facilitated by volunteer social workers and teachers. Each group was asked to elect a moderator, a recorder and a reporter. The participants fanned out in more or less even groups to attend the sessions that were held in individual classrooms. The demand for the Teen-Parent session was so great that an additional group had to be generated. Each group was allotted about 90 minutes of deliberations. Discussion on each topic started with introductions, followed by the election of the facilitators. Some of the adult volunteers were asked to leave the room, while others were invited to stay. Very lively discussions ensued.

The objectives of this gathering were to:

- Positively connect with Haitian youth in a cordial and respectful context.
- Harness their ideas and;
- Recognize their contribution to this community's problem-solving efforts.

Six topics were offered. Participants were expected to discuss and identify solutions to the following issues:

- Teen-Police Relations
- Teen-Parent Relations
- Student-Teacher Relations
- Dressing to be cool/Dressing for success
- Programs needed for Teens
- Solutions to make your environment Safe

Group 1- Teen-Police Relations

Participants identified what they considered to be pertinent issues affecting their relationship with police officers. They debated issues related to respect, discrimination and education. They reported the following:

Issues:

- Police are prejudiced against adolescents in general
- Police officers don't understand certain cultural gestures and may misinterpret them as disrespect.
- The community/teens do not understand how to react when approached by police.
- Many teens feel that police officers are racist and hate Haitians. This opinion is prompted by the fact that, as children, they have witnessed incidents where members of their families were
- Treated disrespectfully by officers.
- Many teens do not feel safe around the police and would not call them if they needed help.

Recommendations:

- Officers need to receive more cultural sensitivity training about Haitian youth.
- Officers need to be friendlier towards Haitian youth.
- Haitian youth need to be educated about the law, their rights and responsibilities.

Group 2- Teen-Parent Relations

These sessions were by far the most popular. Participants identified the problems as follows:

- Haitian parents lack understanding, respect and trust for teens
- Haitian parents lack of understanding the teens rights to privacy
- Haitian parents have very low expectations of their children and always expect the worse.
- Haitian parents avoid talks about sex
- Haitian parents refuse to pay for good clothes
- Haitian parents are overprotective
- Haitian parents never listen

Recommendations:

Haitian parents need to:

- Learn to trust their children
- Give their teens some space to grow
- Understand that school is stressful for adolescents
- Appreciate that their children are learning to be American citizens
- Learn to listen to their children
- Support their children morally
- Encourage their children's dreams and aspirations
- Spend more time with their children

Group 3 - Student/Teacher Relations

Issues:

- Teachers do not take time to explain
- Teachers seem to get easily irritated with the students
- Haitian students feel neglected in the classroom

Recommendations:

- School staff need more training
- Teachers should be more patient with students especially new arrivals
- Teachers should be more culturally sensitive

Group 4 - Dressing to be Cool/ Dressing for success

ISSUES:

- Kids don't know how to dress appropriately
- The police will stop people based on their attire
- People are judged based on how they dress

Solutions:

- Teens need to be taught how to dress appropriately
- Teens need to be taught how to behave appropriately, professional success involves attire and attitudes
- Teens need to be taught how to groom themselves as well. Grooming involves dress, hairstyle, make-up.
- Officers need to learn not to judge teens on their attire

Group 5 - Needed Programs for Teens

ISSUES:

- Insufficient sport programs
- Transportation to some programs are needed
- Programs are needed to prepare for the F-CAT
- Programs are needed for High School students who can't attend college because of immigration issues
- More programs are needed for undocumented teens
- Newly arrived youth are denied the proper academic support
- Youth need help with career counseling
- Youth need help in finding employment

Recommendations:

- Additional free sports programs are needed with free transportation
- Urgent need to implement educational programs that will assist youth with current academic challenges
- Programs are urgently needed for newly arrived youth, including youth currently under INS detention centers
- Make job placement and career assistance programs more accessible

SUMMARY

The Mayor of Miami-Dade County Mr. Alex Penelas issued a challenge to the youth of this community: "Help us identify solutions to the problems facing you." "FE M TANDE W" He said to them. He delegated Ms. Emeline Alexis to assemble many of the stakeholders of this community to empower the youth to identify solutions to real issues facing them. The participants responded with lucidity, frankness and creativity that few thought could be harnessed.

The youth provided some new and refreshing insights into real problems facing them daily. The youth were asked to speak, and they did. They believed in our sincerity and exposed their minds and hearts to us. The participants treaded on some familiar ground but also chartered new ones. The assembly shed some new light on the role the youth can and must play in finding solutions to their problems. This assembly can be an exercise in futility or become the first step of a new journey towards finding lasting solutions to the problems plaguing of our youth. The second annual youth assembly already promises to solidify the gains made and establish the tradition of saying to our youth "FE M TANDE W" and really listen.