



Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees

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Ninaj Raoul & Sonia Pierre, Leogane, Haiti

Celebrating 20 Years

Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees (HWHR) was founded in 1992 to respond to the human needs of Haitian refugees and immigrants arriving in the United States after fleeing persecution. Through education, leadership development and collective action, HWHR members empower themselves as they struggle for social and economic justice.

Over the past decade, HWHR has also provided solidarity support to communities in Haiti to recover and rebuild in the wake of natural and man-made disasters.

Winter 2012

Sonia Pierre's Legacy - A Lifetime Dedication to the Fight Against Injustice

I first met Sonia in 1994 at a Haitian Women's Conference in a workshop concerning Haitian Refugees, only two years after Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees (HWHR) was established. She had co-founded Movimiento de Mujeres Dominicano Haitianas **MUDHA** in 1983 with other women that are Dominicans of Haitian descent, to combat the disparities which they face on a daily basis in the Dominican Republic. Over the years, both organizations collaborated on various disaster relief efforts, dignity and birthrights campaign, and the fight against wrongful deportations.

I am fortunate to have known such a great woman, as a comrade, sister, friend and mentor, Sonia, was a tremendous leader. I'm eternally grateful for the opportunity to have seen and participate in many journeys with Sonia and for her unwavering vision that drove so many of us in the social justice movement. For me, Sonia has been a source of strength and inspiration, and a powerful model of what it takes to build a movement. Her life exemplifies that the causes of justice are always worth our audious efforts. Sonia fought fearlessly to the end, despite the

numerous life threats from so many Dominican nationalists, especially in recent weeks. Despite her unexpected death, a scheduled protest took place one day after Sonia's funeral. Her human example and work for justice for so many are now a permanent legacy. Those of us who knew and loved her must carry her loving concern and fight for dignity and birthrights for Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent forward. That's the best tribute we can give her.



Founded in 1983, MUDHA defends Haitian immigrants and their descendants living in Bateyes, with particular emphasis on children and women's rights. MUDHA's program areas include: preschool education and parent organizing, advocacy for policy reform, legal human rights defense, community health education and services, gender-equity building and environmental conservation.

Empowerment and Solidarity in Haiti

Since the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti, HWHR, has partnered with the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO), Lakou New York, Flanbwayan and KONGO (in the US) to bring solidarity to the Movement of Dominican Women of Haitian Descent (MUDHA) for the work they are doing on the ground in Haiti. Together, we have delivered medicine and medical equipment to areas that have received virtually no aid after the earthquake. Today, more than a million people continue to live in tent cities where food, water, and security are in very short supply. Only a fraction of the billions of dollars in aid promised from countries around the world has reached the people who need it most.

Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees joined the disaster relief efforts of MUDHA (Movimiento De Mujeres Dominico-Haitiana), a nonprofit organization founded in 1983 by Dominican-born Haitian women to assist Haitian immigrants and Dominicans of Haitian descent to adapt to life in the Dominican Republic. Both organizations have worked together on various projects, including disaster relief both Haitian victims of hurricane George in 1998 and tropical storm Jeanne in 2004, and Hurricane Noel in 2007, the four storms and hurricanes that hit Haiti in 2008 and most recently post earthquake relief.

Ninaj Raoul, Director of HWHR, recently returned from Haiti and reports that MUDHA has focused their efforts on working with women in Léogâne, which was at the epicenter of the earthquake. The project is run by Marisol Baez, a woman admired by many for her commitment, creativity and serious no-nonsense stance. She is equally admired for the kindness and care she dispenses to the women and children who reach the MUDHA center with a myriad of issues.

The center conducts a variety of micro-enterprise and counseling workshops for women and currently houses 29 orphans. In addition to dealing with the multitude of needs facing the women and children in Léogâne, Marisol and her staff of volunteers find time to operate a clinic, source desperately needed medicines and provide for children from an orphanage destroyed in the 2010 earthquake.



MUDHA trains women in micro-enterprise projects that produce dishwashing liquid, shampoo and conditioner which help to generate family income.



Last August Ninaj attended the first graduation of this project and witnessed the first 184 graduates of various courses which include making skin and hair products, household cleaners, scented candles, jewelry, traditional clothing and decorative house linens.

The lack of funding and building safe housing in Haiti has had serious consequences for women's safety and security. Rape is a serious concern for women and girls living in the tent cities. MUDHA works with women to raise awareness about their personal security and distributes flashlights and safety whistles for women to deter attackers. For many rape victims, MUDHA is the only place they can find medical and psychological support.

MUDHA has built a women's center in Léogâne which provides shelter to 35 women and children. The center is a safe place for local women to gather, exchange ideas and attend health and economic empowerment trainings.

FREE LEGAL IMMIGRATION CLINICS AT HWHR

By Nathalie Danier

Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees has extended the scope of support available to its community to include legal services. HWHR began offering legal guidance to the Haitian Immigrant Community in October, through Lutheran Social Services of New York (LSSNY)'s Immigration Department.

The legal clinic runs on Thursdays from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the HWHR office located in Flatbush, Brooklyn. Haitian Creole and French speaking Immigration Lawyers and Legal Assistants meet with clients one-on-one.

Clients come to the clinic seeking advice or assistance pertaining to their current TPS (Temporary Protected Status) or other immigrant status, apply for visas or asylum, family unification or to understand and react appropriately to documents received from USCIS or the National Visa Center.

One family, a mother and daughter, entered the U.S. on Humanitarian Parole, an immigration status "based on urgent humanitarian reasons." They were severely injured in the January 2010 earthquake. Humanitarian Parole is most commonly conferred to those who have been severely injured or are in dire health conditions.

Thus, they are deemed legally present despite being inadmissible for the duration of the injury or circumstance. While Humanitarian Parole enabled them to receive benefits, they inquired about access to low-cost housing. They also wanted to know about whether transferring over to TPS would be a better option for them in the future. The LSSNY lawyer explained the pros and cons of TPS in relation to Humanitarian Parole and informed them of possible housing options.

If you are a Haitian Immigrant or know one, who would like to consult with an attorney about an immigration issue, please call (646) 345-6875 and leave us a message with your name and contact information. Your call will be promptly returned and an appointment will be scheduled for the next available Thursday clinic.



*Nathalie Danier, a Haitian-American 2011 Fordham Law Graduate, is completing a public service fellowship with the Immigration Department of Lutheran Social Services of New York (LSSNY), providing legal services on the clinics hosted by Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees (HWHR). Both organizations received funding support from the **Brooklyn Community Foundation-Haitian Community Hope and Healing** Fu*

HWHR Marks Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees (HWHR) marked the November 25th day by honoring: **Maricia Jean** of FAVILEK, involved in the struggle to end violence against women, **Vicki Sylvain**, coordinator of the 1199 SEIU "We Care for Haiti Campaign," started after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, and **Agathina Nozy**, a youth volunteer in the HWHR "Language is Power" project that provides interpreters for Haiti-based rape victims and Morisson and Foerster law firm in the Humanitarian Parole for Women Project.

The encounter brought together three generations of women engaged in the critical and humanistic endeavors of "giving and receiving" to empower women. The three reveled in meeting one another.



Agathina Nozy, Vicki Sylvain & Maricia Jean

"To hear Maricia's testimony, a woman for whom our *Campaign* exists, makes me more determined to help these women," stated Sylvain. The 1199 SEIU Campaign also organizes youth, who participate in community service days to assemble the *Women Survival* (personal hygiene) kits. **HWHR** received 1,000 kits that were sent to Haiti and distributed by **FAVILEK** and **MUDHA**. Concerned community members that attended the event pledged to continue work and action to eliminate violence against women.



HUMAN RIGHTS DAY PANEL A TRIBUTE TO SONIA PIERRE

Barnard Center for Research on Women presents

**Human Rights Day Panel: Sonia Pierre and
the Struggle for Citizenship in the Dominican Republic**
Miriam Neptune, Manuela Pierre, Ninaj Raoul, & Monisha Bajaj

Thursday, Dec 6, 2012 | 6:30PM @ Barnard College | NYC

117th St. & Broadway | James Room, 4th Floor Barnard Hall

Co-Sponsors: **Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees**

Reception to follow – Please R.S.V.P. at haitianrefugees@gmail.com

HWHR

celebrating  years

HAITIAN WOMEN FOR HAITIAN REFUGEES

FREE IMMIGRATION LEGAL CLINICS FOR HAITIAN IMMIGRANTS

@ HWHR provided by Lutheran Social Services of New York

208 Parkside Avenue, 2nd Floor, Brooklyn, NY 11226

Thursdays 5-8 pm

Call for appointment: 718 462-0791

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SURVIVAL ENGLISH CLASSES

HWHR offers free English and Literacy classes for adults.

Class Schedule: Monday and Wednesday 7-9 pm

For Registration call: 718 462-0791

Celebrating Our Strengths • Connecting Our Struggles