OU AYISYEN?
THE MAKING OF A HAITIAN DIASPORIC COMMUNITY IN CHICAGO,
1933-2010

BY
COURTNEY S. CAIN

DISSERTATION
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Doctoral Committee:
Professor Emeritus James Barrett, Chair
Associate Professor Erik McDuffie, Co-chair
Professor Antoinette Burton
Professor Flore Zéphir, University of Missouri
Abstract

This dissertation investigates the formation of the Haitian diaspora in Chicago over the twentieth century. Through original oral history interviews with key community leaders, analysis of Chicago-based newspapers, and previously unexamined organizational records, this is the first comprehensive study to look at the Haitian diaspora in Chicago. Chicago’s Haitian diaspora is different from the more recognized and studied Haitian diasporic communities in New York and Miami and other African diasporic communities for three reasons. First, Jean Baptiste Point DuSable, a fur trader believed to have been from Haiti, founded the city around 1780 which highlights the initial formation of Chicago as a diasporic space. Black women led the movement in Chicago to commemorate DuSable as the founder of the city and played a key role in building connections between Chicago and Haiti which shaped the formation of the Haitian community there. Secondly, the social class composition of Haitians who migrated to Chicago is unique because it is largely professional, educated, and middle class. Finally, the Haitian diaspora in Chicago is smaller and more decentralized than its counterparts in Miami and New York. Approximately 15,000 to 30,000 Haitian descendant people live in Chicago today, but this community does not live in a “Little Haiti,” a neighborhood comprised largely of Haitian immigrants. Instead, Haitians in Chicago are geographically dispersed across the city and its metropolitan area. The distinct historical, demographic, and spatial characteristics of Chicago influenced the ways that Haitians in the city forged community, interacted with other African descendant people, and cultivated transnational linkages to their Caribbean homeland over the twentieth century.
Acknowledgements

I was in the fourth grade when I fell in love with studying history. My teacher, Mrs. Doherty, assigned a group project where we had to reenact one of the events we learned about in our social studies class. I knew exactly what topic I wanted to do, and as soon as I got together with my group, I suggested we reenact the story about the lost colony of Roanoke. Ever since we read about the late sixteenth century English settlement that virtually disappeared, I could not stop thinking about what happened to those people. I wrote a play about the settlement, cast my groupmates into their various roles, and worked with them to come up with costumes to wear. The day for our presentation came, and I had butterflies in my stomach leading up to our turn. Everyone played their parts well, and once it came time to depict the disappearance of the settlers, I turned off all the classroom lights as my groupmates screamed and ran out of the room. I turned the lights back on and said dramatically, “And the settlers of Roanoke were never seen again.” My teacher and classmates erupted in applause as we all took our bow, and I smiled from ear to ear.

For the rest of my elementary and high school education, I looked forward to my history classes and did well in them. By the time I got to college, I knew that I wanted to be a history major. My college courses opened my eyes up to the history of people who looked like me and the study of history: how historians research artifacts left behind and make an argument based on these artifacts. I realized that my fourth-grade play on Roanoke was my first foray into history as a practice: I did not know what happened to the settlement, but I used what I learned and developed an argument/conclusion based on the evidence (that the settlers were driven from the colony due to a catastrophic event).
From the age of eight to the age of thirty and completing three degrees within the discipline of history, I am appreciative of my journey and the many people who helped me get here.

First, I would like to thank my history teachers over the years for instilling a love of the past within me. Thank you to Mrs. Doherty, my fourth-grade teacher who gave me my first taste of being a historian, and Mrs. Clark, my eighth-grade teacher, who affirmed my interest in United States history. Thank you to my history teachers at Marian Catholic High School who introduced me to the art of writing persuasive historical essays. Thank you to my various college history professors, many of whom have mentored me over the course of my undergraduate and graduate tenure: Carol Symes, who taught my very first history class at Illinois and showed me the importance of performance in teaching; Dana Rabin, who led one of the best history classes I have ever taken (here’s to Artemisia!) and has been a kind and motivating voice ever since; Mark Leff, who is no longer with us but left a lasting impression on me after providing extensive feedback on my very first grad school paper while reassuring me that writing was an art form that we are always working on; Terry Barnes, whose seminar on black feminism often pushed me beyond my thinking limits but taught me that I could and should always think about things critically; and Clarence Lang, whose course on black social movements reinforced my love of history, especially black history, and whose encouragement has propelled me forward in ways he may never fully realize. To all the professors in the history department, the African American Studies department, and the Gender and Women Studies department at the University of Illinois, thank you for being a home to me over the last thirteen years and helping me get to this point.
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The entire staff at the University of Illinois library have been nothing but the best: from always having my stack of books ready for me to pick up at the Main Library to the archivists at the Rare Book and Manuscript Library, a sincere thank you for everything you do. Thank you to the staff in the Graduate College at Illinois, especially those in the Educational Equity Programs. Ave Alvarado and Daniel Wong, your mentorship and support since my first summer with the Summer Research Opportunities Program has been essential to my development personally and professionally. I am so appreciative of the both of you. A very big thank you to the staff in the History department, especially Tom Bedwell and Shannon Croft, who have taken care of me over the last seven years. I do not know what the department would do without everything you all do, and I am deeply appreciative for your work and hugs over the years!

This dissertation is also the product of the community that I grew up in, the Haitian diaspora in Chicago. I am so lucky to have grown up in this tight knit and proud community and even luckier that they were so supportive when I told them that I was researching our history. Merci, thank you to all the oral history participants who shared
their stories with me so generously. Thank you for being open and for suggesting other family and friends who would be willing to share their stories with me as well. Your voices are critical to this story, and I hope that I did you all justice. Thank you to the Haitian community in Chicago in general, for thriving and surviving over the years and providing me a rich history to tell. Again, I am deeply honored to be part of this diaspora and plan on continuing to share our story.

This dissertation would also not have been possible without the support, encouragement, feedback, and love from my incredible committee members. Thank you to Flore Zéphir, a Haitian scholar who joined my committee from a different campus and provided the important scholarly knowledge Haitian communities. Flore, you are like family to me; your familiar accent and expertise has been so special to me over these last several years. I cannot thank you enough for serving on my committee. Thank you to Antoinette Burton, one of the examiners from my qualifying exams who started working with me after my first summer of graduate school. You are brilliant and inspiring as a successful woman in academia, and I am so grateful for your support. Thank you to Erik McDuffie, who modeled a passion for history and teaching that I had never seen before. From taking a class with you in college to being the co-chair on my committee, I can always count on you to critically engage my work, push me to be a better scholar, and remind me of the big picture. Thank you to Jim Barrett, who took me on as an advisee during my second year in graduate school. I remember walking into your office for our first meeting, and you agreeing to work with me through your retirement. Here we are, six years later, and you have been nothing short of amazing as an advisor and co-chair. You provide succinct and eloquent feedback and have made me smile more times than
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To my family, thank you for everything. My sisters, Nadine and Daphne: you set the bar high academically, professionally, and personally, and I have wanted to be like you both since I can remember. Thank you for pushing me to be great and for making me the aunt and godmother to the four most amazing kids I have ever known. To my nieces and nephew, Maddie, Lisette, Maya, and Alex: I have stayed on my path to show you that
if you put your mind to something, you can do it. Your love and admiration has filled me with so much love, and I cannot wait to see what you guys do to change the world. To my parents, Llanick and Raymond: your story is what got me here. You took a leap of faith and left your homeland for a better life with no guarantees. You taught your children that education was key to a better life and worked hard to ensure that we would excel. Thank you, thank you, thank you. This dissertation is for you!

Finally, and most important, the words thank you are not enough to express my sincere appreciation to my partner, Princeton. The love and labor of being the partner of a doctoral student is not something that many people understand, and you have stood by me. You helped me get into graduate school, encouraged me to research Haitians when I could not find a topic that moved me, and listened to my various drafts over the years. You encouraged me to dream big and to take control of my destiny. You have been with me through it all, so in many ways, you have earned this doctorate as well. I am forever grateful to you and for you.
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Introduction
Haiti in Chicago, Chicago in Haiti:
The Development of the Haitian Diaspora in Chicago

“Ou Ayisyen?”

It was December 8, 2015, and I was standing at the customs department in Port-au-Prince’s airport. It was my first time in Haiti, the land of my parents’ birth and my ancestors before them, and I was overwhelmed with various emotions. Excitement, nervousness, pride, and fear. Despite growing up in the Chicago Haitian community, the island had remained elusive for the first several decades of my life. Between the media portrayal of Haiti as a dangerous and impoverished wasteland and my parents’ apprehension about returning to the place they had escaped, going to Haiti just never seemed realistic to me. Yet, once I found myself studying the Haitian diaspora in graduate school, I felt like going to Haiti was critical.

As the two customs’ agents checked my passport on that Tuesday afternoon, one casually asked me “Ou Ayisyen?” (Are you Haitian?) I immediately responded with a prideful “Oui!” (Yes!), but then I started to think about my experience as a member of the diaspora. Was I Haitian? Or was I American? That elusive hyphenated identity as a Haitian-American, the daughter of Haitian immigrants, something that I had grappled with my entire life, suddenly presented itself to me in the simplest question. I began to qualify my Haitianess to these two Haitian customs officials. “Ok, paran mwen yo ayisyen avec tout fanmi mwen, men mwen te fèt nan Estad Unis, e sa se premye fwa mwen an Ayiti, men mwen renmen Ayiti y mwen konnen ki jan yo pale kreyòl, ki se evidan depi lè sa se sa m ’lè l sèvi avèk yo pale avèk ou kounye a....”
(“Well, my parents are Haitian and so is the rest of my family, but I was born in America, and this is my first time in Haiti, but I love Haiti and I know how to speak Creole, which is obvious since that is what I am using to speak with you now…”)

One of the customs’ agents looked up at me in the midst of my babbling, held his hand up, and said “No, ou Ayisyen.” (No, you are Haitian.) He stamped my passport, handed it back to me, and said “Byenveni lakay.” (Welcome home.) A sense of relief and pride overcame me, and I felt a sense of acceptance that I realized I had been searching for my entire life. But was I really home? Growing up in the Chicago Haitian diaspora--speaking Haitian Creole at home, eating the cuisine, attending countless parties and gatherings --shaped me. Yet, this was the extent of my knowledge about Haiti, and it took nearly thirty years for me to set foot on the island. I spent the next week in Haiti, and there were moments of deep comfort and happiness there (i.e. meeting and visiting with family I had not seen in years, visiting the Haitian history museum, eating as much Haitian food as I could) as well as moments of uncertainty and discomfort (i.e. being accosted by aggressive street vendors, visiting the overly crowded and at times hostile Iron Market, seeing heavily armed policemen in the streets). In fact, the morning of our departure, we heard about a woman who was recently killed just a few miles from where we were staying. As much as Haiti felt like home, in many ways, it also was not. As I boarded the airplane to return to the United States, I realized I was happy to return to America. Haiti was still a place to visit, and while I planned to come back many times, it would always be as a visitor.

My return to Haiti was a formative personal experience, and it also highlights many of the questions that inspired this dissertation. What does it mean to be Haitian in
the diaspora? How and why did the Haitian diaspora in Chicago form? What role does the second generation play in the diaspora and in the homeland? How do the disconnections and reconnections to the homeland shape diaspora formation and diasporic identity? How have issues of gender, class, and color structured the formation of this community? What role did women play in building the Haitian community in Chicago? How does studying the Haitian diaspora in Chicago challenge prevailing historical narratives of the city, the Midwest, Haiti, and the African diaspora?

This dissertation explores these questions and investigates the making of the Haitian diasporic community in Chicago. Most studies on the Haitian diaspora in the United States focus on New York and Florida because of their size and visibility: New York is home to about 130,000 Haitians today while Miami boasts about 275,000 Haitians. Studies on Haitians in New York and Miami also focus on the contemporary period (1980s-2000s). Scholarly focus on these two diasporas overshadows the long and unique history of Haitians in Chicago beginning with Jean Baptiste DuSable, a free black man from Saint Domingue (present-day Haiti) who is credited with founding the first non-native settlement in Chicago around 1780. Black women led the movement in Chicago to commemorate DuSable as the founder of the city and played a key role in building connections between Chicago and Haiti which shaped the formation of the Haitian community there.

The social class composition of Haitians who migrated to Chicago is unique from the other Haitian diasporas because it is largely professional, educated, and middle class. Also, the Haitian diaspora in Chicago is smaller and more decentralized than its

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counterparts in New York and Miami. Approximately 15,000 to 30,000 Haitian descendant people live in Chicago today, but this community does not live in a “Little Haiti,” a neighborhood comprised largely of Haitian immigrants. Instead, Haitians in Chicago are geographically dispersed across the city and its metropolitan area. The distinct historical, demographic, and spatial characteristics of Chicago influenced the ways that Haitians in the city forged community, interacted with other African descendant people, and cultivated transnational linkages to their Caribbean homeland over the twentieth century.

The Chicago Haitian diaspora has its roots in the late eighteenth century with DuSable, but it took form in the twentieth century. Therefore, this dissertation begins in 1933, when black women in Chicago resurrected the story of DuSable at the 1933-34 World’s Fair, and as the United States occupation of Haiti (1915-1934) reached its end. The years following these events saw important shifts in what scholars call the idea of Haiti, especially among African descendant people in Chicago. Haitian historian Millery Polyné argues that the idea of Haiti is largely produced by North American and Western European ideologies of Christianity, capitalism, and whiteness which juxtapose Haiti as the antithesis to modernity.2 I draw from and recast Polyné’s term to capture how black Chicagoans over the twentieth century have imagined Haiti as their ancestral homeland, symbol of resistance, favored choice for scholarly and artistic inquiry, and tourist destination. Their understandings and misunderstandings of the black republic have played a critical role in how black Chicagoans see themselves in relation to the city, United States, and the world.

The dissertation ends in 2010, the moment when a catastrophic earthquake decimated Port-au-Prince, and in response, many Haitians in Chicago rallied together to help the homeland. The turn back towards Haiti brought the diasporic experience of the twentieth century full circle and shows that the Caribbean nation remained a critical part of diasporic identity of Haitian-descended people in Chicago, even for those not born on the island. Finally, the dedication of the DuSable Bridge across the Chicago River in 2010 symbolized another key victory for the Haitian diaspora in Chicago in the long twentieth century fight for official recognition of the Haitian pioneer in the city.

**Significance and Interventions**

Examining the Haitian diaspora in Chicago expands understandings of the Midwest as a key site for black international immigration, diaspora-making, and black identity formation. Since the passing of the 1965 Hart Cellar Immigration Act, there has been a major shift in immigration to the United States. While the majority of immigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century came from Europe, the newest migrants arrived from Eastern and Southern Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. According to sociologist Mary Waters and historian Reed Ueda, “the liberalization of immigrant policy created a new social framework of multiethnic and multiracial diversity, which has reconfigured American pluralism and national identity.”

Scholars, politicians, and media pundits alike hypothesize that we are entering an era of the minority majority due to the continued migration of people of color to the United States. This shift has reshaped the sociopolitical landscape, evidenced by Barack Obama’s elections in 2008 and 2012 and the nativist backlash which propelled Donald

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Trump to win in 2016. Historian Ronald Bayor argues that this latest rise of nativism among white Americans originates with the rise of immigration from Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean and is based on concern about jobs, crime, disease, poverty, radicalism, and “an overall sense of invasion by non-white inferior groups that would outbreed Anglo-Saxon Americans.”

Haiti is the second largest source of black immigration to the United States and Cook County where Chicago is located is the third largest county for Haitians in the nation. Thus, a case study on Haitians in the Windy City provides an example of the various ways the newest migrants are reshaping their new environment despite the constraints and backlash they experience.

This project also shows that black international migration to the Midwest is not new and that this region has been an important destination of African-descended people from the Caribbean and African for centuries. For Haitians in Chicago, the legacy of DuSable established a unique connection between Chicago and Haiti that flourished after the nearly twenty-year American occupation of the island ended in 1934. According to historian Mary Renda, the occupation opened the door for non-U.S. military personnel to come to Haiti and to participate in a colonial project there. Many black Chicagoans took advantage of this moment and utilized it as an opportunity to develop connections with Haitian people. The occupation also resulted in Haitians traveling to the United States more frequently, and many traveled to Chicago which set the stage for some to permanently settle there.

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The Haitian community in Chicago also highlights how diasporas function and flourish on a smaller scale and shows that diasporas are not contingent on spatial proximity.\(^7\) Since there is no centralized location for Haitians in Chicago, the community relies on social networking (i.e. parties, baptisms, professional and philanthropic organizations) to maintain diasporic connections with one another. Thus, a look at Haitians in Chicago extends the study of the African diaspora by tracing the history of a community and geographic location that has received little attention from scholars of the black diaspora.

The migration of African descendant people like Haitians during the late twentieth century to places like Chicago complicates prevailing understandings of African American identity. The popular perception of African American identity as solely racial erases the various ethnic heritages and cultures within blackness. However, the census definition of “African American” highlights the United States government’s categorization of blackness as multiethnic:

a person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa. The Black racial category includes people marked the “Black, African American, or Negro” checkbox. It also includes respondents who reported entries such as African American; Sub-Saharan African entries, such as Kenyan and Nigerian; and Afro-Caribbean entries, such as Haitian or Jamaican.\(^8\)

Therefore, Haitians, among other black immigrant groups, represent the varying ethnic identities within American blackness and helps us rethink what it means to be black in America.

Scholars and journalists have begun to pay more attention to the variations of blackness, especially as more and more black immigrants come to the United States. As

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\(^7\) “The Haitian Diaspora in the United States,” Migration Policy Institute, July 2014.

journalist James Ragland points out, “we can’t put all blacks…in a single box. Their communities and stories are far more nuanced and complex.” The varying ethnic and cultural backgrounds of black identity in the United States can even cause tension within the community. Black immigrants typically have a different cultural reference when it comes to social norms than African Americans, and this can lead to misunderstandings and cultural incongruences with African Americans. African Americans can also fetishize black immigrant cultures; for Haitians, this often meant the exoticization of voodoo. However, there is also a long history of cross cultural connection between blacks born in the United States and their migrant counterparts, and it is within these connections that the Chicago diaspora cemented itself within the city.

For the purposes of this dissertation, I utilize “Haitian” to identify those born in Haiti and “Haitian American” to categorize the children of Haitian immigrants. For African-descended people born in the United States, I use the term “African American.” I also employ the terms “black” and “African descended” to identify both Haitians and African Americans when applicable. Historian Minkah Makalani argues that the dispersal of Africans to various places in the West created multiple racial formations, and because of this, race and racial terminology cannot easily translate across historical and national contexts. Therefore, the use of any term cannot fully grasp the complexity and nuances of black identity because racial and ethnic identities are always fluid and contingent, but I have chosen the aforementioned terms to provide clarity and differentiation for the reader.

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Theoretical Framework

This dissertation draws from numerous theoretical approaches related to the study of the African diaspora. Historian Frank Guridy describes the unique, dual nature of the African diaspora: “both the dispersal of Africans though the slave trade and their ongoing social, political, and cultural interactions across various boundaries after emancipation”.\textsuperscript{11} Haitians in Chicago represent these interrelated aspects of this definition. First Haiti, located on the island of Hispaniola, was the site of Christopher Columbus’ first permanent colony, which eventually became the richest slave colony in the Western hemisphere. Second, in the late eighteenth century, Jean Baptiste Point DuSable, a Haitian man, founded the first non-native settlement in Chicago. This early settlement set the foundation for ongoing social, political, and cultural interactions between Chicago and Haiti for over two centuries which led to Haitian diaspora to form alongside a mixed-race society in the city.

The diasporic experience involves the constant interaction between the homeland and the hostland, and the process of the hostland becoming the new homeland through these interactions. Historian Kim Butler, among other scholars, defines the homeland as the site of dispersal, the ancestral homeland of migrants that creates an anchor point for the possibility of return. In contrast, the hostland is the new space where migrants form a diasporic community which may develop into the new homeland over time.\textsuperscript{12} The differentiation between the homeland and hostland is critical to Butler’s four-pronged paradigm to categorize diaspora: the dispersal of a group to several locales; a real or

imagined relationship to the homeland which serves as the foundation for diasporan identities to form; the group’s self-awareness of a shared diasporan identity; and the existence of the diaspora over at least two generations.\textsuperscript{13} The Haitian diasporic community in Chicago embodies each of these features. For instance, Chicago is only one of many locales where Haitians have formed diasporic communities; there are Haitian diasporic communities in New York, Boston, Miami, Paris, and Montreal among other places. Haitians in Chicago also have forged real and imagined relationships with Haiti based on memory, travel to the island, and family and friends who still live in Haiti. As Robin D.G. Kelley and Sidney Lemelle argue, diasporic identities and solidarities are based on an “imagined community” which create “dynamic political, intellectual, and cultural movements.”\textsuperscript{14} There is also a strong self-awareness of a shared diasporan identity among Haitians in Chicago, represented by their need to self-identity as Haitian when possible. Finally, the Haitian diasporic identity in Chicago has existed over at least two generations and is currently entering its third generation. As this diaspora grows over time, “they combine the individual migration experience with the collective history of group dispersal and regenesis of communities abroad.”\textsuperscript{15}

Similarly, diaspora scholars Robin D.G. Kelley and Tiffany Patterson define diaspora as both a process and condition that is always being made and remade and situated within global race and gender hierarchies.\textsuperscript{16} This definition captures the history of diaspora-making in Chicago. The Chicago Haitian community has been made and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{14} Sidney Lemelle and Robin D.G. Kelley, eds., \textit{Imagining Home: Class, Culture, and Nationalism in the African Diaspora} (London: Verso, 1994), 7-13.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Butler, 2001, 192.
\end{itemize}
remade over time based on the continuous migration of new Haitians and the shifting relations with black Chicagoans. A condition, issues of race and gender help define the experience of Haitians in Chicago as they both reinforce and challenge what it means to be black men and women in America.

Because issues of race, gender, class, and generation shape the Haitian diaspora in Chicago, I employ an intersectional framework for this study. Intersectionality is a critical tenant of black feminist thought and highlights how the various aspects of one’s identity intersect to create a particular worldview and set of experiences. For black women in the diaspora, intersections of race, class, gender, and generation define how the diaspora would form and expose the gendered contours of diaspora-making. Black women were critical agents in the formation of diasporic connections and community in Chicago, and these women provided “consistent connections between nationalist, feminist, and earlier community positions.” This project not only highlights the role of black women in creating diaspora but also to how issues of race, gender, class, and color shaped diasporan identity formation and community relations.

Through tracing the making of the Haitian diaspora in Chicago, this study extends the geographic scope of the diaspora and appreciates the Midwest as a black transnational space. Erik McDuffie’s framework of the “diasporic Midwest” is critical for understanding the Haitian diaspora in Chicago. McDuffie posits the diasporic Midwest as “an empirical and theoretical framework to extend the study of the African diaspora and

to internationalize African American history.”19 Typically, people view the Midwest, the Northern Central region of the United States, stretching from Ohio to the Dakotas and Kansas, as a parochial and agricultural flatland comprising of mostly white Americans. Meanwhile, scholars of the African diaspora often overlook the importance of the Midwest to global black protest and the African world. Many studies of black Midwestern life either employ a local community framework or situate African Americans within the confines of the nation state. Instead, McDuffie reveals the diverse geographic locales where blacks forged transnational political linkages and the impact of the American heartland in producing a distinct brand of diasporic protest that has shaped global black freedom struggles since before the nineteenth century.20

The Haitian diaspora in Chicago represents the historically transnational nature of the Midwest, especially for blacks, and challenges common narratives of this region as landlocked and isolated from global movements. Chicago is useful for understandings of the diasporic Midwest because of its large immigrant and native-born black populations, and the Chicago Haitian community is one example of the convergence of these two groups. Moreover, census data reveals that the population of black immigrants is currently growing in the Midwest, and this case study of Haitians in Chicago helps to explain why this population is growing locally and regionally and their impact on black global politics.21

Method and Sources

Through extensive newspaper research, original oral history interviews with key leaders and long-time community members, and analysis of previously unexamined organizational records, this study is the first to look at the Haitian diaspora in Chicago through a historical lens. I utilize a linear historical narrative format, highlighting key moments and themes which helped shape the Haitian diaspora in Chicago over two centuries. These moments include DuSable’s tenure in Chicago, the 1893 World’s Fair, the 1933 World’s Fair, the Black Chicago Renaissance, the presidencies of François Duvalier and Jean Claude Duvalier, and the election of the first Haitian political official in Chicago in 2001. Themes include the important role of black women in creating and shaping the diaspora, the DuSable legacy and mythology in Chicago and Haiti, travel of African descendant people between Chicago and Haiti, the shifting idea of Haiti in Chicago over time, the importance of black print culture in creating diaspora, intra-racial coalitions and tensions between Haitians and African Americans, and political intergenerational tensions within the immigrant community.

Newspapers are a critical source to this study as they highlight historical connections between Haiti and Chicago which laid the foundation for a diaspora to form in the late twentieth century. Chicago-based papers including the Chicago Tribune, the Chicago Defender, and the Chicago Whip provide the bulk of source material for this project. Mainstream papers, like the Tribune and the Chicago Reader are interrogated alongside black-owned papers like the Defender and the Whip. The Tribune and Defender are used most because they were the most widely read newspapers during the
twentieth century in Chicago among white and blacks respectively. Their popularity locally, nationally, and internationally helps us to understand how connections between Haiti and Chicago formed over time.

Oral histories help to make up for the deficit of primary source material. I completed forty oral histories with a diverse group of Haitian-identified residents of Chicago because their lived experiences are key to understanding the formation of the diaspora. Their voices provide critical insight into the migrant experience, including motivations for coming to Chicago and feelings about what it means to be part of the Chicago Haitian diaspora. I utilize aliases for each participant in order to provide anonymity.

The organizational documents of a Chicago-based Haitian group also provide a glimpse into how individuals in the diaspora maintain connections with one another. Beginning the in 1990s, professional, philanthropic, and religious organizations became a favored way for Haitians in Chicago to congregate and connect. Historian Chantalle Verna highlights the importance of these groups in smaller diasporas through her study on Haitians in Michigan and argues that Haitians use cultural organizations to sustain community and diaspora. There are currently twenty-two organizations active in Chicago and its suburbs. However, these groups have a great deal of overlap in membership and not much longevity. I chose one of the oldest groups, the Concerned Haitian Americans of Illinois (CHAI), as a lens for understanding why these organizations formed and how they sustained over time.

Founded in 1991, CHAI formed in order to address the needs of the Haitians in the homeland and the hostland. About twenty members of the pioneer generation created the group, including my parents. The children of these founders, who assisted in group activities in the early days, are now at the helm of the organization. Over the course of its twenty-plus year tenure, CHAI has built and supports two schools and conducts annual medical clinics. They have donated over one hundred tons of clothing, medicine, and food to the homeland and have affiliates across the diaspora, including in New York and Florida. Because my parents were among the founders of this organization, I had access to over twenty years of meeting minutes, by-laws, and event booklets. These documents reveal how activists in the group grew together, challenged each other, and balanced their Haitian and American identities.

Finally, census and immigration records have been important and problematic sources. In September 2013, I conducted research in the National Archives in Washington D.C. looking at immigration records dealing with Haitians. These documents revealed the national context and policies that helped shape the Haitian diaspora in Chicago and showed government debate and response to the Haitian refugee crisis. Locally, I accessed information on the Haitian population in Chicago using Ancestry.com records and official Illinois census data on migration and population by nativity and race. These records show a relatively small population of Haitians living in Chicago, while community leaders and newspaper records suggest much higher numbers. Current census data estimates about 10,000 Haitians living in Chicago, while community leaders estimate anywhere from 30,000-35,000, including second and third generation.

Newspaper articles recall Haitian people living in Chicago as early as the 1930s. Based

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on this evidence, I would argue that the actual population of Haitians in Chicago likely falls somewhere in the middle of these two estimates.

Several factors, internal and external to the Chicago Haitian Community make it difficult to accurately determine the of the diaspora. Internally, the language barrier, political turmoil back home, and fraught immigration status of many Haitians may keep some of them hidden. Externally, the stereotypes and the historical efforts by government officials and historians to silence Haitian presence in Chicago since the days of DuSable likely lead to underestimates of this population. For instance, my birth certificate lists my parents’ origin of birth as “other Western nation.” When I asked my parents about this, they both attested to naming Haiti as their place of birth. Yet, the hospital officials at the hospital or at the clerk’s office enfolded me into the “other” category with no mention of race or country of origin. How many other Haitians are listed as “other?” How many Haitians list themselves as other because they are unsure where they fit in? How many Haitians are recorded racially as African American without taking into account their ethnic background? How many Haitians are wrongly recorded as Jamaican, the largest population of black immigrants in Chicago, or another black immigrant group? These issues make the census data problematic, and I challenge them throughout the study.

Literature Review

This study brings together various bodies of literature to explore why and how the Haitian diaspora in Chicago formed. Literature on immigration in the late twentieth century, the histories of Haiti and Chicago, the Haitian diaspora in the United States, and the Haitian community in Chicago are all critical to this research. Each one provides
foundational information to this study but also reveals gaps which I aim to fill with my study.

The historiography on immigration in the late twentieth century challenges immigration narratives from the previous period by examining how immigrants of color assimilate or “become American.” At the turn of the twentieth century, the tide of American immigration turned from northern and western European immigrants, from Germany, Britain, and Ireland, to waves of southern and eastern Europeans, from Poland and Italy, among other countries. Scholars of early twentieth century immigration argue that the second generation, the children of the newest immigrants, became American by claiming whiteness, and by doing so, they successfully assimilated into mainstream American culture and life. In *Working Toward Whiteness: How America’s Immigrants Became White* (2005), David Roediger argues that between 1890-1945, which he calls the “long early twentieth century,” new immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe developed racial consciousness in the United States based on the notions of race they brought with them from the homeland and discussions of race in their new hostland.25 By subscribing to global ideals of white supremacy, the newest immigrants to the United States and their offspring were able to take part in the American Dream.

Post-World War II, the newest immigrants to the United States increasingly came from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean. This shift was due in large part to the 1965 Hart-Cellar Immigration Act. The law which eradicated the race-based quota system put in place by the 1924 Johnson-Reed Immigration Act, and following the enactment of the law, over twenty-five million immigrants of color came to America.

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Their migration changed the racial and ethnic makeup of the United States, and Haitians were part of this change. Historian David Gerber argues that this new legislation was opposed by fifty-eight percent of white Americans at the time, and that the newest immigrants of color struggled to find new ways to become part of the American fabric, if at all. Therefore, the immigration myth that applied to European immigrants did not translate to immigrants of color: “[the story of hard-working, self-starting immigrants of Ellis Island] does not help us to understand those not considered white, for their naturalization was hindered at the very birth of the country by legislation that limited citizenship to white people…” Similarly, political scientist Peter Skerry asserts: “the continuous arrival of poor, uneducated newcomers and the inevitable difficulties they encounter reinforce the perception that immigrants experience racial discrimination.”

For Haitians and other non-English speaking immigrants of color, the assimilation process has been especially fraught. According to Milton Vickerman, Caribbean migrants from places like Jamaica, Haiti, and Barbados, must deal with “the conflict between the strong desire for upward mobility that is implied in the immigrant ethos, and the existence of an entrenched ethnic hierarchy which tends to tightly constrain individuals of African ancestry.” The response of black immigrants is sometimes to distance themselves from African Americans and instead adopt conservative ideals and racist

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28 Gerber, 8.
politics themselves. However, this strategy typically fails. Race is equally about how you see yourself and how others see you, and as the second generation of these migrants matured in America, they typically acculturated into African American culture. The Haitian experience in Chicago highlights the importance of race in the immigrant experience, as well as gender, class, and generational shifts.

Haitian history plays a major role in the development of a Haitian diaspora in Chicago. Scholars focus on three major moments in Haitian history which invariably shaped the country and led to the formation of a large diaspora out of the country: the revolution (1791-1804), the U.S. occupation (1915-1934), and the Duvaliers’ reign (1957-1986). In the three centuries after Christopher Columbus landed on Hispaniola and emancipated the colonization of the Americas, St. Domingue became the most important acquisition of the French empire. The violent colonial regime produced a great deal of wealth for France, mainly through the export of sugar and slaves. Indeed, by 1789, St. Domingue supplied two-thirds of trade for France and was the number one market for the slave trade. However, in 1791, a slave uprising in the Northern province ignited a momentous and arduous battle for black independence. Their victory in 1804 supremely challenged the very cornerstone of colonial thought: black inferiority.

Haitian scholar Michel-Rolph Trouiloft argues that Revolution “entered the historical record as unbelievable, unthinkable, and therefore unacceptable.” The United States, among other world powers, denied Haiti recognition as an independent state out of fear that it would incite similar incidents among their slaves. Thus, the wide range impact

31 See Foner and Vickerman.
of Haitian Revolution can be seen in the various segregation policies of antebellum America. Based on the chronology, the Illinois Black Codes was likely one such mandate and one of the first series laws passed after Illinois gained statehood in 1818. These measures, observed from 1819-1865, were used to limit the freedom of slaves and indentured servants in Illinois and included laws against blacks voting, bearing arms, and the requirement for blacks to carry freedom papers or be presumed a slave. Even as Illinois debated the hotbed slavery question of nineteenth century, it put measures in place to prevent blacks from asserting their full citizenship rights as the Haitians did.

Another critical consequence of the Haitian Revolution was the influx of Haitian refugees who fled to the United States during and after the revolution and, these migrants helped to create the diasporic connections that would flourish in the modern era in places like Chicago. The most visible of these connections was with African Americans, who saw Haiti as the symbol of black sovereignty and authenticity. In response, African Americans and Haitians connected politically, culturally, and socially based on their shared experiences as descendants of Africa and the Middle Passage. Renda highlights how African Americans forged links with Haiti and that these diasporic exchanges were sometimes supported by the Haitian and US governments. Horace Cayton and St. Clair Drake, hypothesize that DuSable came to Chicago as a refugee of the revolution and started a free black colony there.34 While this claim has not been substantiated in the archive, it highlights that the impact of the Haitian Revolution on the campaign to silence the history of DuSable in Chicago.

The occupation provided a way for African Americans to critique whiteness and Americanness. Like Frederick Douglass before them, black intellectuals and cultural figures including James Weldon Johnson, Zora Neal Hurston, Langston Hughes, and Marcus Garvey all recognized the connections between the plight of Haitians, African Americans, and blacks across the diaspora. At first, African Americans supported the Occupation as a way to remedy Haiti’s political and economic shortcomings. Yet, as reports poured in detailing the United States’ aggressive policies in action in Haiti, more and more African Americans began to speak out against the occupation.35 For instance, after the 1929 Cayes Massacre. In Port-au-Prince, Marines opened fire on a crowd and killed 12 Haitians. African Americans connected this violence to the issues they were facing in Jim Crow America. James Weldon Johnson’s 1920 articles in The Nation (many of which were reprinted in the Chicago Defender) helped to expose similar instances of inhumane treatment that the Haitians were receiving at the hands of the United States. Dante Bellegarde, a Haitian intellectual and diplomat also criticized the occupation at the League of Nations and helped build diasporic connections at the Pan-African Congress in 1921, so much so that WEB DuBois named him the international spokesperson for blacks in 1926.36 The work of Johnson and Bellegarde, among others, “asserted the linkages between race, racism, and imperialism” and facilitated a common purpose with Haitians: “to collectively disentangle the tribulations of race and nation to produce intellectual, political, and economic gains.”37 Further, the combination of the

37 Polyné, 66.
black critique across the diaspora and Haitian resistance on the island led the United States to end the occupation by 1934, earlier than originally scheduled.

While the Haitian occupation did lead to some progress in Haiti, namely the expansion of infrastructure, improved healthcare, and updated telephone and irrigation systems, the rural majority did not benefit from the majority of these improvements.\(^{38}\) Noted scholar Noam Chomsky, in the introduction to Paul Farmer’s *The Uses of Haiti*, argues that while the United States defined the occupation as a “humanitarian intervention,” for Haitians, it ultimately represented the “acceleration of Haiti’s economic dependence and sharp political centralization, its economic dependence, and sharp class divisions, the vicious exploitation of the peasantry, the internal conflicts much intensified by the extreme racism of the occupying forces, and…the establishment of an army to fight the people.”\(^{39}\) The end of occupation did not mean the end of American dominance in Haitian affairs; instead it only cemented Haiti as dependent on the United States. This dependence created diasporic critical connections, which would help shape Haiti and the United States over the rest of the twentieth century, especially Chicago and the diasporic Midwest.

Duvalierism, the period between 1957 and 1986 when François “Papa Doc” Duvalier and his son Jean Claude “Baby Doc” reigned in Haiti, decimated the country’s agricultural, educational, and human capital leading to the mass exodus of Haitians out of the country to places like Chicago. Born in 1907, Papa Doc grew up during the occupation, and scholars James Ferguson and Laurent DuBois assert that he was a product of the resistance against American occupation of Haiti because he used a

\(^{38}\) See Bergman and Farmer.

resurgence of black nationalism (Noirisme) and the rise of a new black middle class in Haiti to become president in 1956. Beverly Bell, among other scholars, note that Papa Doc won in a rigged election and that he remained in power due to corrupt practices and U.S. support.\textsuperscript{40} Because Papa Doc presented Haiti as a democratic state during the Cold War, the geopolitical and ideological power struggle between the United States and Russia after World War II which led to the nuclear arms race, the race to space, the construction and deconstruction of the Berlin Wall, and actual combat in places like Africa and Southeast Asia, the United States financially and diplomatically supported his presidency. Meanwhile, Papa Doc used various violent tactics to consolidate power, including exile, kidnappings, and murder, which were carried out by his sanctioned secret police, the Tonton Macoutes. In 1964, he declared himself president for life, and according to Ferguson, the paternalistic and mystic qualities of his presidency also kept the people in line.\textsuperscript{41} David Nicholls echoes this argument in his seminal text, \textit{From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Colour, and National Independence of Haiti} (1979), and argues that after 1964, Duvalier attempted to accommodate certain groups in order to gain their support, namely the business elite of Haiti.

This alliance allowed for a peaceful transition of power to Jean Claude “Baby” Duvalier in 1971 after his father’s death. A nineteen-year-old law student, Baby Doc never had political aspirations, according to scholars, and he left a lot of the decision-making to his mother, older sister, and his father’s political advisors/inner circle. “Baby Doc inherited a mature and established system.”\textsuperscript{42} Baby Doc also continued to align with the U.S. in exchange for foreign aid, and as Farmer notes, this market interdependence
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\item \textsuperscript{40} See Bell, Dubois, Ferguson, Polyné.
\item \textsuperscript{41} Ferguson, 39 & 52.
\item \textsuperscript{42} Elizabeth Abbott, \textit{Haiti the Duvaliers and Their Legacy} (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 162.
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lead to the rise of American manufacturing plants in Haiti, which had a negative impact on the economy.\textsuperscript{43} Poverty and violent suppression of political dissent worsened under Baby Doc, which led to the Haitian refugee crisis, the large number of Haitians escaping the island by raft or boat in the period from the 1970s through 1990s. However, because of Haiti’s Cold War partnership with United States, these refugees were typically blocked from entering the States. Ronald Reagan’s 1981 Interdiction Act solidified the denial of Haitian refugees into the U.S., but that did not stop many from coming to places like Miami, New York, and in smaller numbers, to Chicago. Overall, the “Duvaliers solidif[ed] Haiti as an underdeveloped, corrupt state with rampant state terrorism” and even after Baby Doc fled the country in 1986, Duvalierism continued, which led to the continued out-migration of Haitians.\textsuperscript{44}

The unique history of Chicago helps explain how and why a Haitian diaspora formed there. Black life in Chicago began with DuSable According to Juliette Kinzie, one of the first to write a history of the city, “In giving the early history of Chicago, the Indians say with great simplicity the first white man who settled here was a negro.”\textsuperscript{45} The oral tradition that has survived him determines that he was a mixed-race man from St. Domingue (present-day Haiti). His trading business flourished in Chicago until 1800, when he sold his property to a business partner.

Black people did not disappear from Chicago after DuSable and maintained a small but strong community during the nineteenth century. According to historian Alan Spear, free blacks and escaped slaves formed a small community in Chicago during the

\textsuperscript{43} Farmer, 21.
\textsuperscript{44} Ferguson, vii
\textsuperscript{45} Juliette Kinzie, \textit{Wau-Bun, the "Early Day" in the North-West}. (Derby and Jackson, 1856), 190.
1840s, and by 1890, 15,000 African Americans lived in the city, mainly on the south side. Similarly, historian Christopher Reed argues that during the nineteenth century, blacks in Chicago “experienced a multifaceted involvement within the city’s political economy and maintained a highly visible municipal presence.” The Great Migration, which scholars define as the migration of over six million African Americans out of the South to Northern and Western states in order to escape the violence of Jim Crow segregation between 1910 and 1970 in two major waves, vastly increased the black population in Chicago. In the seminal text, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (1946), sociologists Horace Cayton and St. Clair Drake argue that blacks in Chicago formed their own “city within a city,” a Black Metropolis which was only second to Harlem in its cultural significance. Spear notes that this influx led to the emergence of urban ghettos which first appeared in the late nineteenth century in Chicago. The growth of the black population led to an increase in racialized violence in the Windy City, including the 1919 race riot which left 38 dead, over 500 injured, and 1000 homeless. Haitians would grapple with these issues once they came to the city, and instances of racial violence and oppression informed their migrant experience uniquely.

Black life in Chicago was not just one of tumult however; scholars highlight the various cultural and political gains made by African Americans in the city during the twentieth century which help to explain why Chicago became a favored spot for Haitian migrants.

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48 Cayton and Drake, 12.
travel and migration. Reed posits the 1920s as a decade of revolutionary change for the black community defined by “a massive increase in population, a rising racial consciousness affecting and unifying all classes of African American society, a level of racial solidarity that bonded a community’s thinking into a unified thrust, and a conscious desire for spatial hegemony.” Likewise, cultural scholar Davarian Baldwin argues that during the early twentieth century, Chicago became a site of consumer capitalism, a “central location in the production and distribution of industrial commerce and mass culture [which] helped set the stage for the New Negro’s marketplace intellectual life.”

Thus, both Reed and Baldwin uncover how the Great Migration laid the foundation for a rich culture to form in Chicago based on entrepreneurial ventures, black print culture, a rise in the arts, and civic and political engagement. Works by Darlene Clark Hine, Erik Gellman, and Adam Green echo these sentiments and foreground Chicago as a center for black cultural production with wide-ranging influence.

Much of the scholarship on the Haitian diaspora in United States asserts that Haitians have a long presence in there, with particular growth during the late twentieth century. New York and Florida are home to the largest Haitian diasporas in the states, marked by specific concentrations of Haitians in these locales. In New York, Haitians are typically concentrated in diverse neighborhoods in Brooklyn and Queens and have migrated there since the revolutionary period, while Florida’s enclave grew in

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exponentially since the 1980s and produced a diasporic neighborhood in Miami known as “Little Haiti.” According to scholars, the majority of migrants in both areas work in service sector positions, and for Florida Haitians in particular, they must live down the negative stereotype of the Haitian refugee crisis, since many of the refugees landed on Miami’s beaches. My research provides a different perspective on how Haitian diasporas form. Because of its historical ties to Chicago based on the DuSable legacy, its smaller and geographically dispersed character, and predominately middle class and educated makeup, the Chicago diaspora transforms our understandings of Haitian life in the United States.

The Duvalier regime was the major push factor that brought Haitians in the U.S. in the late twentieth century. “In addition to François Duvalier’s ascent to power in 1957, North American industrialization and the general twentieth century expansion of American power in essentially hegemonic ways are directly responsible for the massive outpouring of unskilled Haitian labor…” These migrants came in waves, a “top-down migration” which began with the skilled and educated in the 1960s and transitioned to the unskilled and impoverished in the 1980s and 1990s. Moreover, scholars argue that the Haitian diaspora in the United States is usually closed off from the mainstream and focused more on Haitian politics vs American politics. Their experiences as black

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54 Jackson, 6.

immigrants and triple minorities lead them to live in a precarious middle ground of holding on to their home culture for survival and comfort while also matriculating into black life in the US. Sociologist Flore Zéphir argues that the Haitian diaspora is “happy to remain Haitian,” and the hyphen of Haitian-American identity “reflects the desire of those who do not consider themselves Americans,” even if they are citizens. However, the second generation help to bridge that hyphenated gap, a topic which will be further explored in this study.

Scholars are beginning to research the Haitian diaspora in places outside of New York and Florida. Verna’s study on Haitians in southeast Michigan explains that Haitians chose less traditional places—places outside New York/the East coast and Florida—to move based on a varied form of consciousness, formal and informal networks, and alliances with non-Haitians with common interests. Similarly, Michel Largey investigated Haitians in Michigan and found that while the numbers may be small, “they have played an important, if overlooked, role in the development of vital institutions in the state.” Sean Mills’ study on Haitians in Quebec reveals that a diasporic community formed there based on familial and religious ties, employment opportunities, and shifting immigration regulations. Similar arguments can be made about Haitians in Chicago which highlights similarities in Haitian diasporic community formation in the Midwest.

Chicago represents a major gap in the literature on the Haitian diaspora, and the little that is written is often critical and does not account for the unique historical

56 Zéphir, ix.
57 Verna, 164.
58 Michael Largey, Haitians in Michigan: Discovering the Peoples of Michigan (Michigan State University Press, 2010), 27.
connections between Haiti and Chicago. Generally, Haitians are recognized as a very small part of the Chicago community and closed off from the mainstream. They are also deemed to be a very divided community, both by space and class. For example, Karen Richman and William Leslie Balan-Gaubert preface an article on the Haitian community in Chicago by quoting, “Ayisyen Chicago,” a 1994 song by Raymond Montes which laments the disconnections among Haitians in Chicago.60 The article, which uncovers the details of a secret meeting between the Haitian community in Chicago and ousted president Jean Bertrand Aristide in 1994, exposes a fraught community embroiled by infighting and misunderstanding. According to the song by Montes and the authors of the article, this is because the Haitian diaspora in Chicago is the only one that has not evolved.

Tekle Woldemikael’s sociological portrait of Haitians in Evanston, a northern suburb of Chicago, stands as the only full-length study of Haitians in this area. Woldemikael argues that this diaspora is largely “unorganizable due to overlapping and loose networks of friendships and kinship” and fractures due to economics and the temporary nature of the migration.61 He also argues that there is a small, elite population of Haitians in Chicago that are largely separated from the lower classes, and this stratification is largely based on the Haitian caste system brought from the homeland. Most salient is Woldemikael’s assessment of second generation Haitians; he argues that the second generation becomes black in an American context over time and that their

assimilation is what cements Haitians in the area. Indeed, he calls this the “process of becoming black American,” and this serves as the title of the book.\(^6^2\)

My research both builds upon and challenges Richman and Woldemikael’s understanding of the Haitian diaspora in Chicago. For one, Richman and Woldemikael do not address the long historical connections between Haiti and Chicago and miss the mark in their assessment of this diaspora as new and underdeveloped. By looking at the Chicago Haitian diaspora through a historical lens, my study challenges these works. Moreover, looking at this community through a historical lens highlights the connections between Haitians and African Americans in the city and how these connections helped facilitate the growth of the diaspora over time which both studies neglect. Richman and Woldemikael also focus on the disconnections and dysfunctions of this diaspora. My work examines these disconnections while putting them in context with the racial conflicts and tensions of Chicago. My work also investigates how social networking provides opportunity for these disconnections to be overcome. Finally, this project examines the intersectionality of blackness in order to uncover the process of identity formation in the diaspora in a more nuanced way.

**Dissertation Overview**

This project is organized into four chronological chapters with an epilogue to conclude the study. Chapter 1, entitled “The Roots of the Haitian Diaspora in Chicago: From DuSable to the 1933-34 World’s Fair” provides the foundation for the dissertation and highlights five major events that created unique connections between Haiti and Chicago. The events highlighted are the founding of the city by Jean Baptiste Pointe

\(^{62}\) Woldemikael, 6.
DuSable and the early campaign to silence his role, the impact of the Haitian Revolution globally and in Chicago specifically, the 1893 World’s Fair and the role of the Haitian Pavilion as a site for intra-racial connection and collaboration, the American Occupation of Haiti and Chicago’s coverage of and response to it, and the 1933-34 World’s Fair, when black women lead the efforts to reclaim DuSable as one of their own and the founder of the city. These five moments set the tone for what makes the Haitian diaspora in Chicago so unique.

Chapter 2, “A Moment of Hope: Building Haiti-Chicago Connections, 1935-1956,” examines how travel of African descendant people between Haiti and Chicago during this period solidified connections between the two spaces and laid the groundwork for a Haitian diaspora to begin in Chicago. Black women and the black press in Chicago were central to the formation of these diasporic connections. Moreover, the campaign to commemorate DuSable in the city had several victories during this period, including the renaming of DuSable High School. The next chapter, “A Moment of Despair: Duvalierism and the Formation of the Haitian Diaspora in Chicago, 1957-1985,” shows how the moment of hope quickly changed under the pervasive dictatorships of François and Jean Claude Duvalier. Their reign combined with other global, national, and local changes to produce the mass exodus of Haitians to the United States, France, and Canada. The Haitian population in Chicago grew exponentially during this era, and Haitians chose Chicago because of the DuSable connection, educational opportunities in the city, and familial connections from those who had migrated there during the early twentieth century.
Chapter 4, “A Moment of Acceptance: The Tenth State and the Chicago Haitian Diaspora, 1986-2009,” addresses the paradoxical moment in the post-Duvalier era when many Haitians thought they would be able to return home. The historic election of Aristide affirmed this belief, albeit briefly, and just as he recognized the diaspora as the tenth province of Haiti, the country again closed off to those in the diaspora. This chapter shows how the post-Duvalier era in Haiti did not end political instability and violence in Haiti which led to the continued out-migration of Haitians and the acceptance of Chicago as the new homeland. Haitian organizations and the second generation of Haitians were central to the entrenchment of the diaspora in the city. The conclusion, “Rebuilding After Rupture: The 2010 Haitian Earthquake and The Future of the Chicago Haitian Diaspora,” marks the devastating Haitian earthquake in January 2010 and the renaming of DuSable Bridge in Chicago that same year as watershed moments in the homeland and hostland that brought the diaspora together and back to Haiti.
Chapter One
The Roots of the Haitian Diaspora in Chicago:
From DuSable to the 1933-34 World’s Fair

Eschikagou, 1779. After making his way from Saint Domingue (present-day Haiti), to New Orleans, Jean Baptiste Point DuSable, a free man of color, finally made it to the underdeveloped region of the Midwest. Without DuSable’s memoirs to rely on, Warren Holmes reimagined this moment, in his novel, *The Warrior’s Belt: Memoirs of Jean Baptiste Pointe DuSable* (2010): “Already I envisioned a trading center garnering rich pelts from Canada…I felt invigorated by sea breeze reminiscent of the ocean’s smell at Cap St. Marc. Reader, I had more than a longing for home. I *was* home.”63 DuSable made Eschikagou, better known as Chicago, his home and became the first non-native settler in the city. His twenty-year reign in the region opened the area to further settlement and set the foundation for Chicago to become a thriving and multiethnic hub for commerce and culture.

This brief story reimagines the moment when DuSable landed in Chicago, the moment that birthed the unique connections between Haiti and Chicago that would grow for the next several centuries. As with many other historical black figures, the archive, historiography, and grand narrative of Chicago silenced DuSable’s story until the early twentieth century, when scholars, authors (like Holmes), and activists began to give him credit for his accomplishments. DuSable’s history and legacy survived outside of the archive due to oral traditions, and black Chicagoans shared his story to legitimize their presence in the city. Specifically, upwardly mobile African American women in Chicago

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created a mythical DuSable in order to establish recognition and respect for their growing community in the city.

The oral tradition of DuSable led to the creation of the idea of Haiti in Chicago. I define the idea of Haiti as understandings of the black island republic as a symbol of black freedom perpetuated by people of African descent in Chicago in response to white oppression and segregation. Between the time DuSable left the city in 1800 and the early 1900s, black migration to Chicago increased tremendously, especially between 1890 and 1920. This period, referred to as the first Great Migration, formed a black enclave in Chicago of over one million people, and most of them lived on the south side of the city. St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton categorized this concentrated black area of Chicago as “a city within a city” and “a significant factor in the Midwest Metropolis.”64 The idea of Haiti impacted African American life and racial politics in the city and state from the late eighteenth century through the 1933-34 Century of Progress. While the number of Haitians living in Chicago during this early period are minuscule if not nonexistent, the cultural legacy of DuSable and the perpetuation of his oral tradition and mythology is significant to the formation of (black) Chicago and helped to build connections between the two spaces which would eventually bring more Haitians to the city.

The idea of Haiti played an important role in shaping black Chicago. I analyze five key events: the life of Jean Baptiste Point DuSable and the oral tradition which survived; the Haitian War of Independence; the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition; the 1915-34 Haitian Occupation by the US; and the 1933-34 Century of Progress International Exposition (the World Fair again held in Chicago). Each of these events

represents how the idea of Haiti helped to shape black Chicago communities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Moreover, these moments of transnational exchange also laid the groundwork for the formation of a vibrant Haitian diaspora and community to take shape in the Windy City following World War II. There is evidence that some Haitians started migrating to Chicago as early as 1890. These initial moments of exchange highlight what makes the Haitian diaspora in Chicago unique: the long history of real and imagined connections between the homeland and hostland which began at the inception of both locales. These moments of early diasporic exchange also highlight the diasporic nature of the Midwest.

The Enduring Oral Tradition and Symbol of Jean Baptiste Point DuSable

The oral tradition and mythology of Jean Baptiste Point DuSable has survived for over two centuries and is vital for understanding the history of black Chicago. DuSable’s story highlights the transnational and diasporic nature of the city from its inception and serves as the basis for the creation of the DuSable myth and symbol created by black Chicagoans, especially black women. The symbol of DuSable as the ancestral father of all black Chicagoans and the archetype of black success in the city allowed black Chicagoans to carve out legitimate space for themselves as they migrated and settled into the Midwestern Metropolis. The DuSable myth also created the idea of Haiti in Chicago which would shape cultural and racial politics for centuries to come and inspire transnational linkages between the two societies. Thus, DuSable’s oral tradition is what sets the Haitian diasporic community in Chicago apart: a Haitian man founded the city which would eventually become home to a vibrant Haitian community deeply connected to the African American community there.
The details of DuSable’s life, debated by scholars, explain why black Chicagoans chose him as symbol of black freedom and possibility in the city. DuSable was born around 1745 in St. Marc, St. Domingue to a French father and an African mother. Like their son, the fundamental information on DuSable’s parents is obscure, with some scholars asserting that DuSable’s father was either a sailor or a pirate and that his mother was either a slave or free woman of color. St. Domingue was one of the most exploitative, oppressive, and profitable slave regimes in the Atlantic world but also had a large free colored population who maintained some societal status in the mid-eighteenth century. Black radical scholar and activist C.L.R. James, in his famous text, *The Black Jacobins*, notes that mulattoes in St. Domingue were at first seen as equal to whites and thus had access to land and education. Similarly, scholar Thomas Meehan points to the long history of well-off mulattoes in St. Domingue who migrated to Louisiana and other French territories in the US as evidence to support DuSable’s Haitian heritage. Illinois country was part of the Francophone empire before the American Revolution. Therefore, it is plausible that DuSable, based on his class status in St. Domingue and occupation, chose to migrate to that area. Further, it was not just mulattoes who migrated to the Midwest; the first blacks that came to Illinois were brought from St. Domingue as slaves in 1720 by French planter Philippe Renault.65 This Haitian presence in Chicago before DuSable’s arrival lends further credence to the oral tradition of his Haitian ancestry. DuSable’s status as a free man of color, juxtaposed to the slave status of the other early Haitians in Illinois, also highlights who black Chicagoans would choose him as a symbol of freedom.

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Some scholars dismiss claims that DuSable was Haitian. Early Chicago historian Milo Quaife argues that DuSable was a “mixed-breed negro” (a term racist in both content and tone) who could have been a native of St. Domingue or a runaway slave from Kentucky. Similarly, John Swenson rejected the belief that DuSable was Haitian, instead linking him to a Canadian family of fur traders, which Quaife echoed in a later work on Chicago. However, these scholars are in the minority since most of the literature affirms him as a mixed-race man from St. Domingue. Historian Alfred Theodore (A.T.) Andréas, Shirley Graham, the wife of W.E.B. DuBois who was also of Haitian descent, and Joseph Jeremie, a Haitian diplomat who claimed to be a descendant of DuSable), all determine that DuSable was Haitian based on the evidence. Similarly, authors Arna Bontemps and Jack Conroy argue that there is “just as much basis for the tradition that DuSable was a Haitian who migrated to New Orleans…” The newest scholarship on DuSable continues in this tradition. Historian Marc Rosier, in his extensively researched book on DuSable, *Chicago’s Authentic Founder: Jean Baptiste Point DuSable or Haitian Secret Agent in the Old Northwest Post* (2015), investigates the various theories around DuSable’s heritage and concludes that DuSable was a Haitian man. According to Rosier, “DuSable must have told his associates that he had been born in the Saint-Domingue colony. The information would have no significance at all, and DuSable would not be the subject of curiosity because there was a direct connection between Saint-Domingue, Canada, Louisiana, and the Northwest.”

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66 Milo Milton Quaife, *Chicago and the Old Northwest, 1673-1835* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1913), 139.
68 Marc Rosier, *Chicago’s Authentic Founder: Jean Baptiste Point DuSable or Haitian Secret Agent in the Old Northwest Outpost, 1745-1818* (Bloomington, IN: Trafford Publishing, 2015), 348.
heritage linked Chicago and Haiti from its very inception which explains how the idea of Haiti became part of early Chicago history.

By 1770, DuSable made it to North America, likely by way of New Orleans. Timothy Baumann, a Missouri archaeologist who has worked extensively on the DuSable Grave Project, claims that DuSable shipwrecked with Clemorgan, his friend from St. Domingue, in New Orleans but Jesuit priests saved him from this precarious situation, being a black man with no freedom papers in the South. His journey up the Mississippi River and throughout the Midwest parallels the travels Southern blacks would later take during the Great Migration and the migration of Haitians among other black immigrants to the Midwest in the later twentieth century. Famed historian Henry Louis Gates calls DuSable’s North American settlement a “personal proto-Great Migration” which would shape the future of blacks in that Midwest who would go on to promote him as the founder of Chicago, one of their own.

DuSable’s relationship with the various indigenous groups that he encountered on his journey was critical to his survival in the diasporic Midwest and thus why he was chosen as a role model for black Chicagoans. DuSable’s French Caribbean heritage explains why he had a close relationship with the Native Americans in the region because as Kinzie notes, there was “usually a strong affection between these two races [the French and Native American groups].”

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69 The DuSable Grave Project began in 2002 through the effort of the African Scientific Research Institute among other state departments and community organizations in the Midwest. The project called for the excavation of DuSable’s gravesite in order to determine more concrete information about him; however, no remains were found. It was determined that his grave was not moved when the cemetery at St. Charles Borromeo Church relocated twice since DuSable’s death.
71 Kinzie, 191.
with Native Americans, which allowed for them to trade and flourish in this region. John Tilley notes, “De Saible [sic] had the “foresight, the courage, the capital, and the ability to see the opportunities there for trade among the Indians.”\textsuperscript{72} Both Graham and Lawrence Cortesi claim that DuSable developed a close relationship with Chief Pontiac of the Ottawa tribe, which helped him to gain favor and respect from various indigenous groups as he learned about the land from them. This explains why Native Americans also played a significant role in keeping the oral history of DuSable alive, remembering him as the first “white” man who founded modern Chicago.\textsuperscript{73}

DuSable solidified his ties with the Potowatomi in Illinois when he married Kittihawa, later known as Catherine. Chicago’s first multiracial and multiethnic couple had two children: Jean Baptiste Jr. and Suzanne. In 1788, the couple solemnized their union in a well-documented Catholic ceremony near St. Louis.\textsuperscript{74} These details about DuSable’s personal life highlight the important connections DuSable made across the Midwest. His relationships with the French, Native Americans, and Catholics, among others, dispel a certain exceptional quality to the life and legacy of this Haitian pioneer. His ability to adapt and to persevere in his new surroundings inspired other black migrants to the region to do the same in the future.

DuSable probably established his homestead in Chicago around 1779, although some scholars do not place him there until 1790, and his success as a businessman in early Chicago made him a symbol of black wealth and prosperity in Chicago. This prominent trading post, which is well documented in the archives, included a farm, store,

\textsuperscript{72} Summary of material on “Jean Point De Saible” from \textit{A Brief History of the Negro in Chicago}, by John L. Tilley, 1 October 1941, Box 2, Folder 4, Negro in Illinois Papers, The Vivian Harsh Collection, Chicago IL.

\textsuperscript{73} See Gates, Kinzie, and Rosier.

\textsuperscript{74} Rosier, 310.
mill, smokehouse, and livestock among other amenities. Swenson notes that DuSable’s farm was the sole source of produce in Chicago at the time, and there are various references to him in the archives as a charismatic and wealthy man who enjoyed the finer things in life in French and British military and trade documents. Such luxury included fine French furniture and art, as well as the infamous French Lombardy poplar trees which surrounded his estate. These French artifacts lend credence to DuSable’s heritage and class privileges and intermixed with Native American décor, a sign of DuSable and Catherine’s diasporic life in action. Moreover, DuSable’s homestead served as the site for many of Chicago’s firsts, including the first wedding (his daughter, Suzanne’s, to Jean Baptiste Pelletier in 1792) and the first baptism (his granddaughter, Eulalia in 1799). As Robert Spinney notes, “this multiethnic family thrived in the multiethnic world of frontier Chicago.”

Just as DuSable was settling into Chicago, he fell victim to the tumultuous land grab occurring in the Midwest. In the wake of the Seven Years/French and Indian War, which ended French control over the Midwest, and the American Revolution, which ended British authority over its North American colonies, the Midwest became contested land. While traveling for work, DuSable was arrested by the British on suspicion of being an American spy and taken to prison at Fort Michilimackinac, near present-day Detroit, Michigan. However, DuSable’s reputation preceded him, and the British released him within a year. His connections with the various Native American tribes of the Midwest is what saved him: according to Rosier and Quaife among other scholars, the Ottawas and

75 See Graham, Rosier, Swenson for more information on DuSable’s children and grandchildren.
Chippewas descended upon Fort Michilimackinac and demanded DuSable’s release. They vouched for DuSable as a respectable man, again highlighting the importance of word of mouth and oral traditions to the story of DuSable. He worked at the Pinery, a trading post near present-day Detroit, before returning to his Chicago settlement.

We know most about the end of DuSable’s life. In 1800, he sold his land in Chicago to Jean La Lime, a French explorer who then sold the land to John Kinzie in 1803, for 6000 lourves (approximately $1700 today) and moved to St. Charles, Missouri. The reason for DuSable’s move is obscure; some scholars speculate that he may have left for a combination of personal and political reasons. For instance, the 1795 Treaty of Greenville opened the door for white settlers to flood into Illinois and thereby pushed the Native Americans out. The ill treatment that these indigenous groups received, documented by Rosier, Cortesi, Graham, and Swenson, may have made it difficult for DuSable to stay there since he was deeply connected to these communities. As a man of means, DuSable could have paid for his land, but he chose to leave instead, likely in solidarity with his wife and larger community. Other theories suggest that DuSable left because he fell out with the Potowattomi when they refused to make him leader in the tribe. Moreover, some point to the death of his wife as his reason for leaving Chicago although there is no record of when she died. He likely chose Missouri because his son was already living there, and the French and native populations continued to coexist. Whatever the reason, DuSable’s departure signaled the end of an important era in early modern Chicago.

DuSable is said to have stayed with either DuSable Jr. or Clemorgan during his time in Missouri. DuSable Jr. was living in St. Charles before 1810 and served as a fur

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77 See Quaife and Rosier.
trader for the Spanish between 1812-1813 before he was killed in 1814\textsuperscript{78}. Again, little detail is known about the last few years of DuSable’s life, except that he eventually became destitute. Rosier describes how DuSable spend the end of his life in litigations with a man named Francis Duquette, who claimed DuSable owed him money. These litigations even landed him in debtors’ prison for a short time. In 1813, he signed over the little he did have to a woman named Eulalia, who was either his granddaughter or a neighbor, in exchange for his care. He died on August 29, 1818, and his death record only stated that he was a “negre.”\textsuperscript{79}

The sparse archival information on DuSable does not diminish the importance of his accomplishments. As with many other important black figures, the inspiration and legacy that DuSable created superseded the archive in the classic sense. If black people had to rely on accurate documentation to identify their history, it would be detrimentally incomplete. To understand the true history of DuSable is to recognize the importance of oral traditions in the black community across the diasporic Midwest. Christopher Reed echoes the importance of oral tradition to the survival of DuSable’s legacy, noting that French traders and mixed French and Native American peoples in the Midwest likely shared his story with the newest black migrants to the area.\textsuperscript{80} These black people would continue this oral tradition and share it among themselves. It is equally important to recognize how Chicago was a transnational and diasporic space at its very inception. Even as the days of French Empire in the Midwest waned, DuSable came to embody the various cultures and traditions of his home and host cultures. Moreover, the life and myth

\textsuperscript{78} See Baumann, Rosier, and Swenson for more information on the life and death of Jean Baptiste Point DuSable Jr.
\textsuperscript{79} See Rosier and Swenson.
\textsuperscript{80} Christopher Reed, \textit{Black Chicago’s First Century: Volume 1, 1833-1900} (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2005), 31.
of DuSable helped cement the idea of Haiti in Chicago, which would continue to shape the city in unique ways and create the ties that formed the Haitian diaspora in the city during the twentieth century. As will be discussed later, black women, particularly those in the National DuSable Memorial Society, would take the helm in perpetuating the myth of DuSable as their racial ancestor in the city, and they relied on the oral history of this pioneer to legitimize their existence within the Chicago landscape.

The Haitian Revolution and How the Idea of Haiti Shaped the Founding Story of Chicago

The Haitian Revolution (1791-1804) further helped to cement the idea of Haiti into the psyche of Chicagoans. It mobilized African Americans in Chicago around the possibility of freedom while also serving as the justification for why DuSable’s legacy would be written out of the grand narrative of the city. Because the victory of the Haitians over their masters threatened global white supremacy, whites around the world did their best to diminish the Revolution and silence the story of Haitian people like DuSable. This explains why John Kinzie was credited as the Father of Chicago in early histories of the city. Kinzie bought DuSable’s estate from Jean La Lime in 1804, and according to Tilley, he “enlarged and approved” the already massive estate.81 Kinzie was also a slave owner, which suggests why he would not want to spread the news that he was taken over the home of a free black man who first settled in the city. Kinzie’s daughter-in-law, Juliette made sure that Kinzie’s role in the city superseded DuSable’s. Her 1856 history of Chicago only briefly mentioned DuSable but noted that he was of Haitian descent, seemingly aware of the negative connotations that would raise.

81 Summary of material on “Jean Point De Saible” from A Brief History of the Negro in Chicago, by John L. Tilley, 1 October 1941, Box 2, Folder 4, Negro in Illinois Papers, The Vivian Harsh Collection, Chicago IL.
Similarly, John Wentworth, a prominent businessman and historian in Chicago, downplayed DuSable’s role in the founding of the city, instead focusing on his Haitian heritage. Wentworth took it a step farther by starting the rumor that DuSable only came to Chicago to start a Haitian colony there. In an 1875 speech at a meeting of the Sunday Lecture Society, Wentworth stated: “Our first settler was a negro from San Domingo…He did his best to ingratiate himself into the affections of the Indians, with the idea of becoming a chief, and then sending back for more of his countrymen, and planting a San Domingo colony here.”

Rosier asserts that the efforts of Kinzie and Wentworth were part of a “campaign by the new owners of Chicago to delegitimize DuSable.” This campaign is just one example of how the idea of Haiti influenced Chicago during its earliest days: the fear surrounding black independence in Haiti inspired a white supremacist version of history to overshadow the important role of DuSable, a Haitian black man, in the founding of the city.

Another critical consequence of the Haitian Revolution was the migration between Haiti and the United States during and after the Revolution. Like DuSable, these migrants helped to create the diasporic connections that would flourish in the modern era. The most visible of these connections was with African Americans, who saw Haiti as the symbol of black sovereignty and authenticity especially after it gained independence. In response to this migration, African Americans and Haitians connected politically, culturally, and socially based on their shared experiences as descendants of Africa and the Middle Passage. Scholar Garvey Lundy examines how the Haitian Revolution

82 John Wentworth, A lecture delivered before the Sunday Lecture Society at McCormick Hall on April 11, 1875, in Henry Higgins Hurlburt, *Chicago Antiquities: Comprising Original Items and Relations Letters, Extracts, and Notes Pertaining to Chicago Embellish with Views, Portraits, Autographs, etc.* (Chicago, 1881), 377.
83 Rosier, 468.
changed African American consciousness in Philadelphia, inspiring a more pan-African awareness. Similarly, Mary Renda highlights how African Americans forged links with Haiti and that the Haitian and United States governments often supported these diasporic exchanges. Sara Fanning’s look at the African American emigration movement of the 1820s echoes these sentiments, noting that “emigration to Haiti resulted from the common-sense desire of black people in the United States and Haiti for the political and social empowerment of themselves, their race, and their nation.”

The Haitian Revolution also inspired a Haitian emigration movement in Illinois. In 1822, George Flower, a philanthropist and abolitionist, led a back to Haiti movement. Dismayed by the “racial persecution and enslavement in Illinois and the United States” that blacks had to face, Flower sent Robert Graham, a merchant, to Haiti to evaluate the possibilities of African American resettlement there. Haitian president Jean Pierre-Boyer agreed to facilitate this resettlement and even offered to pay for it. Fanning argues that Boyer supported emigration as a way to create cultural, diplomatic, and trade relations with the United States, especially under the constant threat of French reinvasion. In 1823, thirty blacks moved from Illinois and southern Indiana to Haiti and the Haitian government gave them land to farm there. Their success paved the way for five thousand more to emigrate from New York and Baltimore, but this emigration movement was overall unsuccessful. Despite its failure, Flower’s Back to Haiti movement highlights the importance of the idea of Haiti to Illinoisans, not just in Chicago, but across the state and diasporic Midwest. The connections—“cultural links forged by migration”—continued to

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85 Rosier, 386.
form over the course of the nineteenth century. These moments highlights how the idea of Haiti, cemented by the Haitian Revolution, influenced events and decisions in early Chicago and Illinois.

**Diasporic Connections at the 1893 Chicago World Fair’s Haitian Pavilion**

The 1893 Columbian Exposition represents another moment when the idea of Haiti in Chicago and the connections between black Chicagoans and Haitians grew. The 1893 fair commemorated the four hundred years since Columbus’ voyage (hence the title being the Columbian Exposition) and the emergence of the US as a leading global power. Sociologist Elliot Rudwick and historian August Meier argue that the fair also spoke to the optimism of the modern era, and the rapidly growing metropolis of Chicago embodied this modernity. For black Chicagoans, the fair provided an opportunity to display their progress and achievement as freedmen and freedwomen. After DuSable left the city in 1800, the black population in Chicago was mostly negligible for the next forty years. By the 1840s, free blacks and escaped slaves formed a small community in Chicago but the pre-Civil War segregation in the city kept these numbers low.

Sociologists St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton note that Chicago was an important stop on the Underground Railroad, and by the start of the Civil War in 1861, about a thousand blacks were living in the city. Postwar, the population continued to grow, and in 1890, there were about fifteen thousand blacks in Chicago, mainly concentrated to the South Side.

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86 Fanning, 2.
88 Cayton and Drake, 39.
89 Spear, 6.
The fair presented a unique opportunity for the growing black community in Chicago to display the progress they had made in the thirty years since they became free citizens in the United States. Historian Christopher Reed argues that the fair provided an opportunity for the heterogeneous black community of Chicago to participate and thus meet the requirements of their newfound citizenship. However, there were divisions among blacks in Chicago and across the nation about how to best represent the race at the fair. While some called for a separate Negro Day and special exhibits, others wanted black achievement represented throughout the fair. Ultimately, discrimination permeated the literal and figurative “White City,” and the black experience was largely absent from the fair. Historian Mia Bay argues that the debate among the African American community provided a “pretext for excluding blacks all together” from the Fair; because there was not one unified black answer as to how they should fit into the Fair, whites decided for them which led to their overall absence.

One of the only places that provided a space for the black experience to be seen and heard at the fair was the Haitian Pavilion. Scholar Barbara Ballard asserts, “the pavilion of the Republic of Haiti stood as the only structure erected by a black nation and the only autonomous representation of people of African descent in the White City.” This diasporic space served as the headquarters for black protest of the fair and a site for various discussions about the plight of blacks in the United States, the Caribbean, and Africa. Frederick Douglass, the noted abolitionist, intellectual, and orator, was appointed Haiti’s commissioner at the 1893 Chicago World Fair in large part because of the

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90 Reed, *Black Chicago’s First Century*, 19.
connections he had made with prominent Haitians during his short tenure as the U.S. ambassador to Haiti. In a speech given at the Pavilion, Douglass highlighted Haiti’s rich history and the critical connections between Haiti and United States, especially for those of African descent.

We should not forget that the freedom you and I enjoy to-day…the freedom that has come to the colored race the world over, is largely due to the brave stand taken by the black sons, of Haiti ninety years ago. When they struck for freedom, they builded better than they knew. Their swords were not drawn and could not be drawn simply for themselves alone. They were linked and interlinked with their race, and striking for their freedom, they struck for the freedom of every black man in the world.93

This passage not only represents early Pan-Africanist thought, as Reed notes, but more importantly, it shows the integral role that Douglass played in establishing diasporic connections between Haitians and Chicagoans. He helped to (re)educate blacks in Chicago about the importance of Haiti to their freedom and tied the freedom struggles of blacks across the diaspora. In this way, he reignited the links between the two spaces inaugurated by DuSable a hundred years prior.

While Douglass recognized the “black sons” of the Haitian Revolution, it was his collaboration with anti-lynching activist, journalist, orator, and author Ida B. Wells that highlights the critical role that black women played creating diaspora in the diasporic Midwest. Wells, an ex-slave who taught herself to read and write and rose to became one of the preeminent leaders of her generation, saw the fair as a chance to address the world on the issues plaguing the black community-lynching in particular.94 Once she realized that the black voice would be silenced at the fair, much like it was across American society, she curated a pamphlet called “The Reason Why the Colored American is Not in

93 Frederick Douglass, “Lecture on Haiti” (speech, Webster University, Chicago, IL, January 2, 1893), http://www2.webster.edu/~corbetre/haiti/history/1844-1915/douglass.htm.
94 Bay, 152.
the World’s Columbian Exposition” (1893). This pamphlet, which she handed out at the Haitian Pavilion, served as a way to “protest and remedy the lack of African American representation” at the fair.\textsuperscript{95} It included essays from Wells, Douglass, Ferdinand Barnett, a Chicago lawyer and activist, and Irving Garland Penn, a minister and newspaper editor. Wells laid out the ways in which American society stifled black life, despite the freedom promised by the victory of the Civil War: the convict lease system, lynching, and disenfranchisement. Wells also made sure to have translations in both German and French in the pamphlet, speaking to the international audience of the fair but also to the partnership with Haiti since French was its official language. These translations suggest that Wells was in tune with how the issues plaguing blacks in the United States were also pertinent to blacks across the diaspora, including in Haiti.

In her autobiography, Wells noted the diasporic exchange that occurred in the Haitian Pavilion, “one of the gems of the World’s Fair.”\textsuperscript{96} She detailed how many people-white and black-came to the Pavilion to hear Douglass speak, which was ironic since the fair did not deem it important to have African American representation at the event: “Needless to say, the Haitian building was the chosen spot, for representative Negroes of the country who visited the fair were to be found along with the Haitians and citizens of other foreign countries.”\textsuperscript{97} This quote marks diaspora in action: how the Haitian Pavilion served as a space for African Americans and Haitians to come together, share experiences, discuss common issues, and exchange ideas and solutions on how to help


\textsuperscript{97} Ibid.
the black race across the diaspora. These linkages would be fundamental in the coming century in Chicago.

Overall, the 1893 Columbian Exposition represents another important moment in diaspora-building between Haitians and Chicagoans. By providing African Americans a space to protest their lack of representation and continued oppression, it is clear that the Haitian government recognized the connections between them. Ferdinand Barnett, one of the authors of the pamphlet and a prominent black Chicago lawyer, lauded this comradery, deeming it a “courtesy the colored American received from a foreign power the place denied to him at home.” This collaboration at the fair also provided another opportunity for the idea of Haiti to become more of a reality to black Chicagoans. The activities on Haytian [sic] Day on August 16, 1893 showcased the music of the island, and representatives served Haitian coffee at the Pavilion. These are examples of the cultural exchange between African Americans and Haitians that took place at this event. Despite there being no recorded mention of DuSable at the fair, I argue that the collaboration and connections formed between Haitians and black Chicago at this event represent his legacy. African Americans would build on these links during their protest against the mistreatments of their Haitian brothers and sisters thirty years later, during the 1915-1934 U.S. occupation of Haiti.

The 1915-1934 U.S. Occupation of Haiti and the Transformed Idea of Haiti in Chicago

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99 Christopher Reed, All the World Is Here! The Black Presence at White City (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 173 & 178.
100 Reed, 178.
The nearly twenty-year occupation of Haiti by the United States is a key turning point during the twentieth century which opened the doors for strong diasporic connections to form between Haitians and African American in Chicago. As part of the Monroe Doctrine (1823), the United States laid claim to the Western hemisphere and saw any foreign presence as an act of aggression in which they would intervene. The stipulation was that the United States would not intervene in countries that had reached “stability, order, and prosperity.”\(^{101}\) The United States observed massive political tumult in Haiti, including seven assassinated and overthrown presidents on the island republic between 1911-1915 which was the exact opposite of “stability, order, and prosperity.” Because of this, the United States kept warships near Haiti and invaded the country twelve times between 1902-1915.\(^{102}\) Haitian president Vilbrun Guillaume Sam’s assassination and the subsequent riots led President Woodrow Wilson to dispatch Marines to Haiti in 1915. This marked the official start of the American occupation of Haiti, but the United States had already assumed control of the Haitian National Bank in 1914. By 1917, the U.S had installed a new president sympathetic to American intervention, Phillipe Sundre Dartiguenave, dissolved the Haitian legislature, and made a new constitution, which allowed foreign land ownership and investments for the first time since Haitian independence.\(^{103}\)

Over the course of the occupation, over 11,000 Haitians were killed, including Charlemagne Peralte, a leader of the cacos rebellion whose corpse Marines displayed on


a crucifix as a way to discourage further resistance. Further, American racial and gender politics intermingled with Haitian understandings of color and class, which exacerbated the long-standing tension between the mixed race elite and black majority in Haiti. Historian Mary Renda argues that Haiti served as space for white men to regain power; asserting power over Haitian men and women served as a way for white men to stave off the efforts of women and blacks attempting to assert their equal rights back home in America. According to US Marine Admiral H.S. Knapp, the previous mixed race rulers of Haiti were the ones resisting of the occupation, and the US was there to protect the black majority in Haiti from “harpies of their own race.” Yet, at the end of the occupation, the U.S. returned power to the mixed-race elite in Haiti, despite early claims that the U.S. was there to empower the black majority to self-govern.

Press coverage of the Haitian occupation in Chicago and nationwide supports Renda’s claim of the impact of American racism on the implementation of control in Haiti; those there to protect the black majority were no better than the “harpies of their own race.” For example, much of the occupation coverage in the Chicago Tribune used racist language to describe Haitians, including terms like backwards, savages, primitive. One 1920 article headline simply read “Haitians ate slain officer,” asserting that Haitians were uncivilized barbarians who needed the US to civilize it. Even the mulattoes were seen as “damned niggers,” and “semi-cultured.” Moreover, the country was almost always referred to as the “Negro republic” in the mainstream media, showing the importance of race in how the press and public viewed Haiti. This mainstream idea of Haiti, perpetuated by the media and supported by the popular eugenics movement of the

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105 “Haitians ate slain officer,” Chicago Daily Tribune, December 1, 1920.
era, coalesced with the fact that many of the Marines stationed in Haiti were from the South where Jim Crow segregation ruled interactions between the races. With all of this, it is no surprise that Haitians were also seen and treated with disdain by their occupiers.

Understandings of gender and masculinity also intersected with understandings of race during the Haitian occupation. For instance, Lieutenant O. Poland who was stationed in Gonaïves (a city on the west coast of Haiti) wrote a letter to the Tribune about his experiences interacting with Haitians. He detailed the need for American intervention to help protect Haitians from each other, especially the youth. Specifically, he felt that the Haitian boys would benefit from the creation of a Boy Scout troop because “it might divert the lads from the heathenish joy they derive from torturing animals.”¹⁰⁷ The following year, in 1921, the Evanston Boy Scouts followed Poland’s request and sent care packages to the Marines and Haitian boys. The packages included sports equipment so the Haitian boys could start their own troop. These examples not only highlight the United States’ purported goal of being a benevolent occupier in Haiti but also highlight how understandings of what it means to be a man and boy were transmitted during the occupation. The creation of an all-boys club where they played sports and traversed nature was deemed to be civilized and thus superior to how boys came of age and expressed their masculinity in Haiti. Notions of masculinity continued to be important to diasporic exchange between Haiti and Chicago over the twentieth century.

Most important, the occupation functioned as “an encounter, a process” which produced diasporic connections between the two spaces.¹⁰⁸ As white Marines were reclaimed their identity and power as the patriarchal leaders of their homes and the

¹⁰⁸ Renda, 20.
greater Western hemisphere, Haitian culture, like *voudou*, *Creole*, and literature, impacted them. These cultural artifacts would be circulated around the United States during and after the occupation, which deepened connections between the two spaces. Moreover, a Haitian immigrant community, fleeing the occupation, formed alongside African American communities in US urban centers, especially New York. Historian Chantalle Verna, in her examination of the Haitian diaspora in Michigan, also links this pioneer generation of Haitian immigrants (whom she calls those who were “invited”) to the occupation and argues that many of these migrants eventually resettled in the Midwest for economic security and safety. Likewise, Irma Watkins-Owens notes that Caribbean-born migrants came to the North and Midwest due to labor shortages and expansion of transportation networks, which “resulted in an inevitable reshaping of identities and raised a number of questions for newcomer and native alike.” In this light, the Haitian occupation coincided with the first major wave of the Great Migration, and therefore expands scholars’ understanding of the diasporic scope of this movement.

Haitians began traveling to and migrating to Chicago, during this era, supporting the claim that the occupation was foundational for diasporic community formation. Fred Earnest, a Haitian man living in Detroit, Michigan, spoke with the *Chicago Defender* in 1915 about the need for peace in his homeland. He hoped to work with the revolutionary parties in Haiti to “use the civilized way of Christian people-use the ballot.” Although he lived in Detroit, Earnest worked on Michigan Ave. in Chicago at a rug retailer.

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109 Renda, 265.
Earnest’s status as a mixed-race Haitian who subscribed to respectability politics helps to explain why he posited himself as the Abraham Lincoln of his people. This instance also shows the impact of American politics on Haitian political thought.

In 1925, Elvyra Thomas came to Chicago to visit her brother, Samuel, who had been living in the city. The daughter of the Haitian president of the council of states, Thomas had the opportunity to travel and migrate during the occupation like Earnest. When interviewed by the Defender about her impressions of Chicago, she noted the communication difficulties due to the language barrier, homesickness, and that Chicago was too cold. This migrant experience foreshadows how many Haitians described feeling upon coming to Chicago; how the language, climate, and new landscape made them long for home. Even Haitian President Louis Borno visited Chicago during the occupation. He attended a Eucharistic conference in the city and gave a speech about the benefits of the occupation. Borno also visited industrial plants in Chicago, likely to prepare for the construction of similar plants in Haiti. These three examples of Haitians in Chicago highlight how the diaspora in the Midwestern metropolis have deep roots and how the occupation mobilized dialogue around the reality of Haitian life in Chicago which expanded the idea of Haiti that had been foundational to the city since its inception. Moreover, these examples foreshadow the middle-class orientation of the Chicago Haitian diaspora that would form, since all three people who came to Chicago were part of the elite class of Haiti.

The occupation provided a way for African Americans to critique whiteness and Americaness, which solidified the diasporic bonds which had been forming between

113 Ibid.
114 Evangeline Roberts, “Charming Visitor Here from Haiti,” Chicago Defender, October 17, 1925.
115 “President Borno of Haiti will be in Chicago Today,” Chicago Tribune, June 19, 1926.
Haitians and African Americans since the late nineteenth century. Like Frederick Douglass and Ida B. Wells before them, black intellectuals and cultural figures including James Weldon Johnson, Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, and Marcus Garvey all recognized the connections between the plight of Haitians, African Americans, and blacks across the diaspora. At first, African Americans supported the occupation as a way to remedy Haiti’s political and economic shortcomings. Many black journalists posited the use of black troops in Haiti as the best way to help the tumultuous country. For instance, in a December 1920 editorial featured in The *Chicago Whip*, the paper critiqued the government’s use of white soldiers, and the suggested the use of black troops as a solution because “the American Negro at heart resents the ill treatment of his black brothers.”\(^{116}\) Yet, as reports poured in detailing the United States’ aggressive policies in action in Haiti, more and more African Americans spoke out against the occupation and called for its end.\(^{117}\)

Black Chicagoans had a special stake in decrying the Haitian occupation as they could relate to the immense racial violence Haitians were facing. At the same time as Marines violently suppressed anti-occupation resistance by Haitians in 1919, Chicago found itself in the midst of a tumultuous race riot. After a young black man was killed on a South Side beach, mob violence ensued. In *Race Riot: Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919*, William Tuttle Jr. argues that “the tensions that eventually erupted in bloodshed in Chicago were born in attitudes of racial superiority and inferiority… and nurtured on the killing floors of stockyards, on all-white blocks threatened with black occupancy, and in

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\(^{117}\) See Chapter 2 of Polyné.
parks and on beaches that were racially contested.”

That is, the rising black population in the city due to the Great Migration combined with the white supremacist politics of the era, which in Chicago meant highly segregated but spatially close neighborhoods, erupted on that summer day. Between July 27 and August 3, 1919, a racial conflict engulfed the city and left nearly 40 people dead and 500 injured. Chicago’s race riot was part of a Red Summer 1919, when race riots erupted in major cities across the country, and when you juxtapose these national riots with the bloodshed of the Haitian occupation, one can see the impact of racism across the diaspora. Thus, in speaking out against the violence Haitians were facing, it is possible that black journalists in Chicago connected their own domestic struggles against racism with that of their diasporic brothers and sisters.

While the occupation did lead to some progress in Haiti, namely the expansion of infrastructure, improved healthcare, and updated telephone and irrigation systems, the rural majority did not benefit from the majority of these improvements, although posited as the original beneficiaries of the occupation. Historian and social critic Noam Chomsky argues that the while the United States defined the occupation as a “humanitarian intervention,” for Haitians, it ultimately represented the “acceleration of Haiti’s economic dependence and sharp political centralization, its economic dependence, and sharp class divisions, the vicious exploitation of the peasantry, the [intensification of] internal conflicts by the extreme racism of the occupying forces, and…the establishment of an army to fight the people.”

The end of occupation did not mean the end of American dominance in Haitian affairs; instead it only cemented Haiti as a U.S.

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119 See Bergman and Farmer.
dependency. This dependence fostered conditions that lead to the formation of the Haitian diaspora in Chicago.

1933-34 Century of Progress Exposition and the Reclamaton of DuSable

In the final years of the occupation, the 1933-34 Century of Progress helped cement the idea of Haiti in the mind of Chicagoans by showcasing the significant contribution of Jean Baptiste Point DuSable. The work of black women during this event brought DuSable back into the sociopolitical forefront of the city, and this trend continued over the course of the twentieth century. Forty years after the Columbian Exposition, the city of Chicago hosted another World’s Fair, this time to commemorate the one hundred years since the city’s inception. While Chicago slowly grew during the nineteenth century, the city emerged as a global metropolis and a center for African American progress in politics, business, and culture by the turn of the twentieth century. Spear identifies the Great Fire of 1871 which destroyed thousands of buildings, killed around 300 people, and caused almost $200 million in damages as the turning point that led Chicago to rebuild bigger and better than before and ascend to become the symbol of the industrial age and American Dream.

For Annie Oliver and the black women in the National DuSable Memorial Society (NDMS), it was important for the organizers and visitors of the fair to remember that the roots of Chicago’s greatness stemmed from DuSable. Although the DuSable home site was honored with an official plaque in 1912, his legacy still remained largely hidden from the public history of the city. Thus, Oliver and the NDMS saw the Fair as the perfect opportunity to commemorate DuSable as a way to highlight the important role

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122 Gates, 6.
black people played in the development of Chicago. According to historian Cheryl Ganz, the NDMS used the fair “to create a memorial for Chicago’s first citizen and businessman and simultaneously underscore the importance of the African American community to the progress of Chicago.”

Initially, there was debate among blacks Chicagoans and across the country about how to commemorate black progress at the fair. Similar to the 1893 World’s Fair, many blacks did not want a separate exhibit, especially Chicago’s black middle class leadership who mobilized around the fair, including Robert Abbott of the *Chicago Defender* and Jesse Binga, a prominent Chicago bank owner. According to Reed, this difference of opinion was emblematic of the various strategies blacks used for racial advancement: conciliation vs. protest. This was not the only obstacle to the DuSable exhibit, however; Reed details three other main obstacles: a preference to highlight Fort Dearborn; other competing groups highlighting racial progress; and economic struggles to fund the exhibit. First, the Fort Dearborn exhibit, which was located across from the DuSable exhibit, represented when the United States gained control of the city and thus the beginning of white power in the region. Second, there were other groups who attempted to represent black life in Chicago, including Modupe Paris, a West African prince and University of Chicago student who led the unsuccessful effort for an African exhibit. Third, the bleak economic climate of the Great Depression made garnering funds for a black exhibit from the city of Chicago very difficult.

By January 1933, these obstacles were overcome, and the decision was made to have separate black exhibit honoring DuSable. The NDMS had only five months to create

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124 Reed, 407.
the exhibit, and with support from the Chicago Urban League and NAACP, these black women built a replica of DuSable’s cabin that stood 8 feet by 12 feet. While the replica was not as expansive as the original, it became the most popular black exhibit at the fair. The cabin was only one part of the DuSable exhibit; there were also lectures given on DuSable’s life and legacy. In addition, Oliver published a pamphlet on DuSable that served as a key text in the history of black Chicago. The pamphlet, a scholarly study researched and written by the African American teachers who formed the NDMS, gave a history of DuSable, asserting that he was a “Santo Domingo Negro” who amassed a large fortune from the fur trade. The pamphlet also included a poem by Frank L. Hayes, entitled “De Saible.” In the poem, Hayes spoke directly to DuSable, positing whether his spirit was present at the fair. “You’re among the dead, they tell me, but your heart still/Beats, Though your traps aren’t set amid the swamp grass anymore.” Hayes highlighted DuSable’s Haitian heritage as well: “You forsook the tropic island where the trade winds blow/Crossed the Caribbean, and you sought the wide frontier.” This line represents how the oral tradition of DuSable survived, and now Hayes, along with NDMS brought it forward into a new century for the newest migrants of Chicago to learn and relate to. Moreover, this reclamation of the DuSable oral tradition by the newest Chicago migrants marks the moment when they transformed him into the symbol of black

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125 Ibid, 410.
Chicago and in this way, (re)connected Haiti and Chicago as spaces for black people and progress.

Overall, the DuSable exhibit served as source of pride for its visitors and beyond; that a black man founded a great city in America gave them hope in the midst of the immeasurable discrimination they faced under Jim Crow doctrine. However Reed argues that the DuSable memorial was not about race: “Consistent with the independence of the black middle class, the Urban League and DeSaible Society rejected any suggestion that the memorial homestead represented special consideration for blacks.”

DuSable was the father of all Chicago, not just blacks. While the black activists may very well have downplayed the racial undertones of the DuSable exhibit, this was likely in effort to assure funding for the exhibit. Furthermore, race was a key factor for the visitors of the exhibit, and the fact that DuSable was black was critical to their response to the exhibit. As Ganz notes, the black clubwomen of NDMS used the DuSable exhibit to fight “against negative [racial] stereotypes while also illustrating progress for their race.”

The fair and the DuSable exhibit “generated a surge of black assertiveness for justice and equal rights.” The aftermath of the exhibit was far reaching, and the NDMS’s activism led to the continued recognition of DuSable across the city. Moreover, the key role black women like Oliver and her cohort played in the Fair emphasizes the vital role they would play in future Chicago civil rights action, especially their campaign to get DuSable recognized as Chicago’s founder. Most important, the DuSable exhibit reignited the diasporic connections between Haiti and Chicago that would grow

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131 Ganz, 115.
132 Ibid, 2.
exponentially over the coming years. By asserting that DuSable was of Haitian descent, the NDMS (re)invigorated the idea of Haiti to the mind of Chicagoans.

**Conclusion**

In the NDMS pamphlet on DuSable, they declared the following: “History has performers, who if not exactly legendary, are so obscure as far as the chronicle of their lives are concerned that, but for their achievements, they are of no more value than mythical characters….du Sable is one who suffers from both angles.” Jean Baptiste Point DuSable, a free man from the colony of Saint Domingue, came to the Midwest and founded what would become one of the largest cities in the world. His legacy, while contested and sometimes ignored, has survived due to the oral traditions of black people who transformed him into their mythical forefather. Because the archive often silences black achievement, black people share the stories of pioneers like DuSable orally and pass them down from generation to generation. Black women in Chicago, particularly Oliver and the NDMS, took the lead in sharing DuSable’s story and their work would continue over the rest of the century. This oral tradition also cemented the idea of Haiti into the foundation of Chicago’s history, a concept that would lead to very real connections between the two spaces over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Specifically, the Haitian Revolution inspired a campaign to keep DuSable’s role out of the grand (white) narrative of Chicago and led to a small group of blacks to relocate to the newly free black republic. The 1893 Columbian Exposition served as a space for diasporic connection to form between African Americans and Haitians, as the Haitian Pavilion stood as the only place that showcased black achievement. The U.S.

133 “Some Historical Facts about Jean Baptiste Point Desaible,” for booklet on DeSaible by NDMS, 20 May 1933. Box 1, Folder 8, Negro in Illinois Papers. Vivian Harsh Collection, Carter G. Woodson Library, Chicago, IL.
occupation of Haiti (1915-1934) inspired African Americans to expand their resistance against white oppression across the diaspora, recognizing the connections between the racial violence they experienced at home, namely the 1919 Chicago race riot, and the racial violence Haitians faced at the hands of American marines. The occupation also opened the door for Haitians to begin migrating to Chicago in small numbers. Finally, the 1933-34 Century of Progress provided an additional opportunity for black people to reclaim DuSable and reconnect the importance of Haiti to Chicago’s founding. These moments set the stage for a Haitian diaspora to slowly form in the city over the rest of the twentieth century.
Chapter Two
A Moment of Hope: Building Haiti-Chicago Connections, 1935-1956

In February 1946, the *Chicago Defender*, the preeminent newspaper for African Americans in the U.S. and the Caribbean world, featured an article about Joseph Jeremie, a Haitian diplomat, lawyer, and publisher. Jeremie had a long political career, “filling almost every public office in the national government for 57 years,” even serving as provisional president of the country at one point.\(^{134}\) He collaborated with many important international figures, including Frederick Douglass with whom he worked on the Haitian committee for the 1893 Chicago Columbian Exposition. Despite all of his accomplishments, Jeremie had one thing that he still wanted to do: visit Chicago, Illinois, the city founded by his maternal ancestor, Jean Baptiste Point DuSable.

While Jeremie was not able to visit Chicago before his death, he did publish a book on his purported ancestor in 1950. Entitled *Haiti et Chicago (Haiti and Chicago)*, Jeremie noted that while much of the general history in the United States erased DuSable as the founder of Chicago, many Haitians claimed him and expressed pride at his accomplishments. The familial name Dessables linked Haitians to DuSable, and like Jeremie, many of them wanted to go to Chicago to seek fortune and a better life just as DuSable had.\(^{135}\) According to a review of the book in the *Chicago Tribune*, “Chicago historians know that the first long term settler and trader on the banks of the Chicago River was Jean Baptiste Point du Sable, of French and Negro blood and Haitian

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background. They have not been aware, however, that the present dean of journalists in Haiti, aged 97 but still writing, claims to be the great grandson of Du Sable.”

Jeremie’s interest in DuSable and Chicago highlights the unique link between Haiti and the city, which flourished in the period after the U.S. occupation of Haiti ended. The era between 1935 (when the occupation ended) and 1956 (the start of the pervasive Duvalier regime in Haiti) further entrenched the diasporic links between the two spaces and planted the seeds for early Haitian migration to Chicago to begin. Specifically, travel for various reasons—diplomacy, educational opportunities, and tourism—facilitated the idea of Haiti in the imaginations of Chicagoans and the idea of Chicago as a place for resettlement and prosperity in the minds of Haitians. The black Chicago press, including Robert Abbott’s Chicago Defender and Claude Barnett’s Associated Negro Press (ANP), played integral roles in facilitating these connections as well. Further, there is evidence of early Haitian settlement in Chicago during this period. These early migrants were small in number (under 500 according to 1930-1960 census data) but their presence influenced Chicago’s politics and education, among other important institutions. These migrants were often educated professionals who had familial and kinship ties to Chicago, and these factors would continue to define this diaspora over time.

Travel to Haiti reached an apex during this period, especially for African Americans. Scholars like Millery Polyné and Léon Pamphile attribute this to the popular view of Haiti as representative of authentic blackness (the Africa of the West) and thus a proximate symbol of black pride during Chicago’s Black Cultural Renaissance. Anne Meis Knupfer defines the Black Chicago Renaissance as the period between 1930 and

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136 “A Line O’ Type or Two: Chicago and Haiti,” Chicago Tribune, March 30, 1955.
1960 when “Chicago black artists, scholars, teachers, and activists drew from the cultural politics of pan-African identity thereby expanding their social protests to include the worldwide exploitation of people of African descent.”

The concerted effort between African Americans and Haitians to connect, both in rhetoric and in action, represents one area where this pan-African awareness expanded. Black leaders in Chicago, like Barnett and Abbott, made it part of their mission to report accurate news on Haiti by establishing contacts with Haitians through regular correspondence and sending journalists to the island to work alongside Haitian press officials. Darlene Clark Hine calls the Defender “a primary publishing vehicle for cultivation and promotion of the Black Chicago Renaissance” especially in its coverage of national and international events. Similarly, Polyné argues that “Claude Barnett and the [Associated Negro Press]…served as consistent links between several disparate individuals, events, and movements between US blacks and Haitians over a period of three decades.” Both personal and professional in nature, these relationships continued into the early 1960s when François Duvalier’s regime silenced both the Haitian and American press.

At the same time as black Americans traveled to Haiti, Haitian tourists, diplomats, and immigrants brought their understandings of race, class and gender with them as they visited Chicago, interacting with and shaping black perceptions of identity in the local community. In two Defender articles from 1944, the issue of colorism, the belief that mixed race or lighter skinned blacks are more desirable than those of darker complexion,

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in Haiti was critiqued not only for its impact on Haiti but also on Chicago because Haitian immigrants brought these racial understandings with them. However, the popularity of colorism in Haiti was challenged by the (re)emergence of black consciousness, known as the noirisme movement, which was the result of the 1946 revolution in Haiti. Known as “the greatest moment of political promise, defined by the rise of popular labor movements, noirisme, and cross-class nationalism,” this shift found many Haitians identifying their authentic culture and identity with the black majority of the island and indigenous cultural artifacts like voudou. The revolution also connected Haitians and African Americans as part of the larger African diaspora engaging in civil rights struggles worldwide. These understandings of race in Haiti intersected with shifting understandings of race in the United States in general and Chicago in particular, which highlights how issues of class affected intra-racial coalitions.

The relationship between Chicago and Haiti during this period helps explain the black diasporic nature of the burgeoning African American community in the city and the important role of black women in shaping this transnational culture. While the migration of African Americans briefly stalled due to the Great Depression in the 1930s, the black population tripled in the city between 1940 and 1960, from approximately 278,000 to 813,000. Sociologists Horace Cayton and St. Clair Drake’s classic work, Black Metropolis, describes Southern blacks’ migration to Chicago in the post-World War II era to find freedom and a better life, transforming the Midwestern metropolis in the process. They identify DuSable as the originator of Chicago’s rich black history and

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142 Smith, 192.
culture, something that historian Arnold Hirsch echoes, but they do not account for the Haitian migration and travel to Chicago during this period. Nor do they acknowledge the important diasporic connections created during the Haitian occupation, which led to the exchange of people and culture between Haiti and Chicago in its aftermath. This chapter examines the important role of Haiti, the idea of Haiti, and the DuSable legacy in Chicago’s changing racial politics.

This chapter also highlights the important role that black women played in creating the Haitian diaspora in Chicago. The Chicago chapter of the Feminine League of Social Action (FLSA), Haiti’s first feminist organization, and the National DuSable Memorial Society (NDMS) represent early black diasporic feminism in action, and the groups’ leaders, namely Annie Oliver, founder of the NDMS, and Madeleine Bouchereau, one of the leaders of the FLSA, played important roles in the formation of the Haitian diaspora in Chicago. Oliver and Bouchereau are just two examples of black women serving as storytellers and pioneers of diasporic movements for equality. Much of the literature on black women’s activism in Chicago during this era focuses on the black clubwomen’s movement and the leadership of women like Fannie Barrier Williams and Ida B. Wells. Meis Knupfer argues that black women “promot[ed] the expressive arts, sustain[ed] community institutions, and foster[ed] black solidarity through social protests” in her investigation of black women’s activism during the Black Chicago Renaissance, and she briefly highlights the pan-African approach of Oliver’s activism. This chapter adds a transnational dimension to this scholarship by examining the

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145 Knupfer, 2, 15.
diasporic work that Haitian and African American women did together to change the way that women were viewed and treated across the African diaspora. Predating the oft-studied second wave feminism movement of the 1960s and 1970s, black women in Chicago and Haiti from the 1930s through the 1950s set the foundation for women of color to lead movements of gender equality in the future.

The period between 1934 and 1956 marked “an ideological and political conflict in Haiti in the wake of the occupation and during World War II and the Cold War” which inspired many changes both inside and outside the country. One result of this era of change was that the idea of Haiti started to become more of a reality, especially for Chicagoans. The U.S. occupation of Haiti made Haiti more of a reality for Chicagoans by spurring travel to and from the island. In the two decades after this, Haiti became an important space for Chicagoans to visit and experience, and this shaped the way they saw themselves and the modern world. That is, Haiti represented a space for Americans, and Chicagoans in particular, to grapple with that it meant to be modern in the burgeoning Cold War era. This process was not seamless however, as the exoticization and stereotyping of Haitian culture (particularly voudou) persisted. These exotic imaginings were just as important because they reveal the difficulties of diaspora formation and the cultural clash that would at times impede understandings between African Americans and Haitians. At the same time, Haitians traveled to and settled into the Chicagoland area, which furthered the exchange of people, ideas, and culture between the two locales. Many of the Haitians who came to Chicago during this period were part of the elite class, which foreshadowed the largely middle-class make-up of the Chicago Haitian diasporic community.

Smith, 1.
The Renaming of DuSable High School: Black Women and the DuSable Campaign in Chicago

In the years after the 1933-34 Chicago World’s Exposition and the end of the U.S. occupation in Haiti in August 1934, Annie Oliver and the NDMS’s campaign to commemorate DuSable’s legacy kicked into gear. In a January 1, 1936 Defender editorial, Oliver was deemed the “THINKING Race woman” whose efforts “perpetuat[ed] the memory of DuSable, Negro pioneer.” After the success of the DuSable exhibit at the fair, Oliver and the organization garnered more black community support. “Using the power of place, public conduct, print, and language, Oliver and the other members of the society sparked a public dialogue that elevated DuSable to his rightful place as a key historical figure in Chicago’s history.” Their next initiative was the campaign to rename the new Wendell Phillips High School (WPHS) to DuSable High School (DHS) in 1936.

Located in the heart of Chicago’s South Side, DuSable High School was built to accommodate the city’s growing African American population. During the Great Migration, African American migrants came to northern cities looking for better paying jobs, political participation, and higher access to education for themselves and their children. Between 1890 and 1920, the black population more than doubled in Chicago to over 100,000 people. A Chicago Tribune article from 1920 predicted that this population shift would lead the first WPHS to become an all-black school. “The possibility of Wendell Phillips High School at Thirty-ninth street and Prairie Avenue

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147 “The First White Settler in Chicago Was A Negro,” The Chicago Defender, January 1, 1936.
being set apart for colored pupils “by a natural segregation” was suggested by Principal Charles Perrine….The district around Wendell Phillips is rapidly becoming settled by colored people, and there are comparatively few white pupils.”\textsuperscript{150} Because of this growing population and its “natural segregation,” Wendell Phillips High School became severely overcrowded, and the Chicago School Board approved the construction for a new high school in 1929. The construction stalled for several years due to the economic woes of the Great Depression, but by February 1935, the New Wendell Phillips High School opened. This was due in large part to the New Deal’s National Industrial Recovery Act, which supported public works projects as part of the agenda towards national recovery from the Depression.\textsuperscript{151}

Before the new high school opened, Annie Oliver and the NDMS lobbied to have it renamed after DuSable, petitioning the Board of Education in 1932 and advocating for the change as a way “to further perpetuate the name and memory of this sturdy Negro pioneer.”\textsuperscript{152} The NDMS worked closely with Robert Abbott of the \textit{Chicago Defender} to garner support for the renaming, and Abbott featured a poll in the newspaper so that readers could vote on the new name.\textsuperscript{153} DuSable’s name won, and in April 1936, the new high school—lauded by many for its modern architecture and robust curriculum—was officially renamed Jean Baptiste DuSable High School. Oliver invited Abbott to speak at the renaming ceremony, held on June 9, 1936.\textsuperscript{154}

\textsuperscript{151} “DuSable High School: Final Landmark Recommendation,” The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, September 6, 2012. Also see Knupfer, 76.
\textsuperscript{152} “Group Celebrates the Renaming of City High School,” \textit{The Chicago Defender}, September 12, 1936.
\textsuperscript{153} “The First White Settler in Chicago Was A Negro,” \textit{The Chicago Defender}, January 1, 1936.
\textsuperscript{154} Annie Oliver to Robert Abbott, 28 May 1936, Box 7 Folder 45, Robert Abbott Papers, Vivian Harsh Collection, Carter G. Woodson Library.
The renaming of DuSable High School exemplifies the critical role of black women in building the diaspora through their advocacy of his memory. As a pioneer and entrepreneur, DuSable could serve as inspiration for the increasing number of black youth in the city. Thus, by commemorating DuSable’s name and legacy, these women saw themselves as investing in the future of their community. The movement around the name and legacy of DuSable was a major part of the civil rights initiative in the city because the silence around his memory was seen as representative of the prevailing silence around black achievement and black life in Chicago in general.

Backlash and protest surrounding the renaming of the high school highlights resistance to the measure. The arguments against DuSable High School called into question DuSable’s achievements, race, heritage, and the spelling of his name. In an editorial for the Chicago Tribune, journalist June Provines noted the confusion surrounding the spelling of DuSable’s name: “[i]t is understood that the principal of the school cautioned the teachers not to write the name until they have been given official confirmation of the spelling.”155 The author also reflected on the delay in honoring DuSable around the city, contending that it was not about racial discrimination but instead that John Kinzie was more of a permanent settler while DuSable “only stayed for seventeen years.”156 Similarly, in an article from the Virginia paper, the New Journal and Guide, the argument against the name change was rooted in the belief that DuSable was of French descent, “not a Negro,” and whether or not he was the first settler of Chicago.157 These questions, which continue to permeate DuSable’s legacy, help to explain why Oliver and the NDMS advocated for the renaming. They understood that as

156 Ibid.
157 “Change High School’s Name to ‘DuSable,’” New Journal and Guide, June 20, 1936.
a black man, DuSable’s story did not fit into the grand narrative of Chicago’s history. By placing his name on a high school, it would serve as a visual and permanent reminder of his contributions to Chicago’s culture, especially for the African American students who would attend the school.

At the same time, there was also concern among Chicago’s African American population about the renaming. A May 1936 Defender article noted that black parents feared that the change would negatively impact the school’s accreditation, which would in turn hurt the students’ chance at acceptance into a good college. While Superintendent William Johnson denied this, there was evidence that the re-accreditation process would take over a year, which would impact the 1936 graduating class in the short-term. Specifically, without accreditation, these students would be subject to an entrance exam required a fee, something many of the newest working-class migrants could not afford.

Further, the article highlighted the sentimental value of the name Wendell Phillips. Wendell Phillips was a well-known Boston abolitionist who also advocated for the rights of Native Americans and women’s suffrage, and the high school that honored him in Chicago opened in 1904. Like DuSable High School, Wendell Phillips High opened due to overall population growth in Chicago, but it was tailored to mainly wealthy and middle-class white students. After the first wave of the Great Migration, WPHS became an important fixture in the black community, which explains why some people did not want the change. “Many parents have looked forward to having their sons and daughters graduate from their Alma Mater so let us hope that this year’s class will be

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the 31st successive class from Wendell Phillips high school.” Thus, the name change debate reflected the tensions between the older black community in Chicago versus the newest migrants. James Grossman notes that while kinship and community ties cemented the new African American community in Chicago during the long Great Migration, “tensions [existed] between newcomers and the “old settlers” [existed] based on differences in age, region of origin, and class.” This tension continued as more blacks, including Haitians, joined this diaspora over the next seventy years.

DuSable High School ultimately became “a community cornerstone and educational institution that influenced generations of African Americans.” It trained some of the most influential black people of the twentieth century, including Harold Washington, John H. Johnson, the founder of Jet and Ebony magazines, Timuel Black, historian, and the singer Nat King Cole. The famous music teacher Captain Walter Henn Dyett, trained Cole, and jazz singers Dinah Washington and Dorothy Donegan. Scholar and artist Dr. Margaret Burroughs taught art at DuSable for over two decades. Burroughs, along with her husband later founded the DuSable Museum of African American History, another major institution which commemorated DuSable’s contributions to Chicago and African American history. Burroughs, like Oliver and the NDMS, represents the important role of black women in the civil rights struggles of early Chicago and how they tied this to the legacy of DuSable.

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Finally, the renaming of DuSable High School represented the growing recognition of DuSable among blacks across the city in general. It is significant that a poll in the *Defender* was integral to the renaming of the school because it showed that the newest migrants had a growing awareness of the black founder of the city. Black organizations like the DuSable Historical Society and DeSaible Lounge highlight the widespread desire to see DuSable commemorated in the city. According to Christopher Reed, “from the De Saible Club of the Men’s Division of the Chicago Urban League…to the predominately female De Saible Memorial Society...led by schoolteacher Mrs. Annie Oliver, DuSable’s persona assumed the center of attention and became the focus of adulation.”\(^\text{162}\) The *Chicago Bee*, a conservative black newspaper, featured an article on DuSable in 1944, noting his important role in both the founding of the city and the American Revolution. The city honored the “Haitian Negro” with a floral tribute on the Michigan Avenue bridge, and the newspaper deemed this commemoration “belated.”\(^\text{163}\) The paper’s assertion that DuSable was Haitian, as part of the growing DuSable campaign, is one example of the instances which expanded the idea of Haiti in the mind of black Chicagoans and laid the foundation for the Haitian diaspora to eventually form there.

**The Bud Billiken Club and Diasporic Masculinity**

The correspondence between Haitian and African American youth facilitated by *The Chicago Defender* represents another moment that fostered the idea of Haiti in the mind of Chicagoans and the idea of Chicago in the mind of Haitians. In 1921, the *Defender* created the Bud Billiken Club (BBC) for its youngest fans as an offshoot of the


\(^{163}\) “City to Honor DuSable, Negro Who Founded Chicago, Monday,” *Chicago Bee*, December 3, 1944.
Defender Junior page.\(^{164}\) Hayumi Higuchi credits the young readers of The Defender with inspiring the creation for the BBC, after Abbott developed the Bud Billiken character as “a symbol of guardianship and the protection of children.”\(^{165}\) The BBC was an “educational organization to encourage black kids to write and read in order to understand the new world.” In this way, the BBC represented an important way for black people, specifically youth, to take part in the transnational and diasporic changes of the post-World War I era, and the membership expanded to the Caribbean, South America, Asia, and Africa by the 1930s.\(^{166}\)

From the late 1920s through late 1930s, the Defender received several letters from Haitian teens who were interested in joining the BBC. In April 1927, Cap-Haïtien resident Firmin Bastien detailed his interest in joining the organization to trade pictures, since he attested to being an amateur photographer.\(^{167}\) He highlighted the beauty of Haiti, “the Queen of Islands, land of bright sunshine,” and requested to trade letters with other Billikens who spoke French, since that was “the language of my country.”\(^{168}\) This letter represents how a young Haitian Defender reader saw himself within the world of the BBC: a cultured black boy who wanted to build connections across the diaspora. The photographs of Haiti represent cultural artifacts that helped spread the idea of Haiti not

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\(^{165}\) Higuchi, 156. There seems to be some discrepancy in the literature between who first created the mascot Bud Billiken. According to Peter Rutkoff, Cheryl Ganz, and William B. Scott, Willard Motley created the character and went on to be the first Bud Billiken for seven years. Differently, Hayumi Higuchi and Ethan Michaeli credit Robert Watkins, a Chicago teen, with being the inspiration behind and the first acting Bud Billiken. Higuchi and Michaeli state that Motley took over as Bud Billiken in 1922. See Peter Rutkoff and William B. Scott, “Pinkster in Chicago: Bud Billiken and the Mayor of Bronzeville, 1930-1945,” Journal of African American History, 89 (Autumn 2004): 316-330.

\(^{166}\) Higuchi, 156.

\(^{167}\) “From Haiti,” The Chicago Defender, April 16, 1921.

\(^{168}\) Ibid.
only to his pen pals but to the other Defender Jr. readers who read his leader, many of them in Chicago. This letter came during the U.S. occupation which supports the claim that the occupation created diasporic connections which would flourish in later years. Moreover, Bastien’s framing of himself as a viable member of the BBC, set the tone for more young Haitian men like him to join the organization.

Over the course of 1937, three Haitian letters were featured in the newspaper, suggesting increased Haitian interest of the BBC, the Defender and the city of Chicago. In January 1937, the paper printed a letter from Emmanuel Hogarth, a seventeen-year-old student from Port-au-Prince. “Indeed, I want to become a member of your club, because I have seen in the Chicago Defender that much boys of my age join the Bud Billiken Club.”169 Like Bastien, Hogarth detailed his ability to speak French but also noted that he was learning English and Spanish in school. Further, Hogarth noted that while he attended school in Port-au-Prince, he was a native of Léogâne, Haiti, where his parents still lived. He ended the letter with the promise to send a follow-up with his picture included and looked forward to receiving his “membership card button soon.”170

In August, the Defender printed a similar letter from Marcel Malary, age sixteen, who attended Lycée Pétion and was introduced to the BBC by his friend and classmate, Emmanuel Hogarth. Indeed, Malary referred to Hogarth as “the first member in this club in Haiti.”171 Malary and his brother, René, were both eager to join the club in order to “write foreign friends and to exchange photos and pictures.”172 Like Hogarth, they requested official membership buttons and club rules so that they could join the BBC.

170 Ibid.
171 “Haitian is Anxious to Get Letters,” Chicago Defender (National edition), August 28, 1937
172 Ibid.
which had become “well known…in Haiti.” In December, Gerard Astree, a friend of Hogarth and a fellow native of Léogâne, wrote to say he was also interested in becoming a member. Like the other boys, the official BBC memorabilia peaked Astree’s interest, and he wanted to exchange letters and photos with the other Billikens as soon as possible.

These letters highlight the important role of the *Chicago Defender* and its youth branch, the BBC, in helping to strengthen connections between Haiti and Chicago. Specifically, the BBC facilitated a cultural exchange between young Haitians and Chicagoans through the form of letters, photos, and membership buttons. In 1939, the newspaper advertised that the letters of Paul Crespac, a Billiken from Port-au-Prince, would “always bear Haitian stamps.” These items served as physical markers of the diaspora in action and helped make Haiti more real for Chicagoans and Chicago more real for Haitians. This process exemplifies the concerted effort across the diasporic Midwest and U.S.-Caribbean world to connect black people.

The passion for the club is striking in the correspondence published by the newspaper. Both Malary and Astree committed to writing more in the future, so the printed letters were likely only a sample of the correspondence the paper received for the BBC. Moreover, the boys asked for the mission and membership rules to be forwarded back to them. According to Higuchi, there was no fee for the BBC, and members received an official membership card and button which inspired a sense of pride in belonging to the organization. In the struggle for black equality across the United States and Caribbean, the BBC was a way for the future leaders of the race to connect and lay the foundation for a better future.

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173 Ibid.
174 “Strolling with the Billikens,” *Chicago Defender*, January 14, 1939.
Moreover, the authors of all the letters were Haitian boys. While the BBC was open to both girls and boys, it is noteworthy that the Defender highlighted young Haitian boys as the future leaders of the race. As Rutkoff and Scott note, the rules of the BBC aligned with the rules of black middle-class respectability and race pride. These letters represent the ideal of black masculinity as well, highlighting the intersectional nature of identity formation within the diasporic process. These teens portrayed themselves as educated, multilingual, and ambitious leaders looking to make deeper connections with similar black youth across the African diaspora. This aligned well with the BBC’s goal to “instill national and racial consciousness in African American children.”

It is key that Bastien and Hogarth mentioned that they were fluent in French since French was often associated with a more middle-class/upper-class upbringing in Haiti versus Haitian Creole which the majority of the country spoke. Hogarth, Malary, and Astree all attended Lycée Pétion in Port-au-Prince and lived at the school during the school-year, a fact which also suggests that they came from family of some means. Haitian president Alexandre Pétion created Lycée Pétion in 1816, and according to historian Laurent DuBois, it “remains one of the elite institutions of Haiti” today, like the Harvard of Haiti. Thus, by publishing these letters, it suggests that the Defender promoted a Talented Tenth framework for the future leaders across the diaspora: W.E.B. DuBois’ theory that the black community would be led by the educated and accomplished top ten percent of the race.

This framework foreshadows the largely middle-class nature of the Haitian diaspora that took shape in Chicago. The earliest travelers to Chicago from Haiti mirrored

175 Higuchi, 154.
the BBC teens: well-educated, ambitious, multilingual, and eager to build connections with other blacks across the diaspora. This desire to connect was mutual, and the *Defender* promoted these sorts of “Race Men and Women” to its large readership and helped shape the future Haitian diaspora in Chicago. Therefore, while the BBC’s main initiative was to boost sales and circulation, it also took part in a larger diasporic project which influenced both Chicago and Haiti.

**The Rosenwald Fellowship and the Impact of Haiti on the Diasporic Midwest**

While Haitian youth turned their attention to Chicago via the *Chicago Defender* and the Bud Billiken Club, many black Chicagoans also looked to Haiti for cultural inspiration and racial awareness. The Rosenwald Fellowship paved the way for many African Americans to travel to Haiti and foster diasporic connections that would cement the idea of Haiti in the mind of Chicagoans. Specifically, Haiti became the inspiration for black artists in the city during the Black Chicago Renaissance, the period between 1930 and 1960 when national and international events produced transformations of black consciousness and the creation of new art and culture in the Midwestern Metropolis.¹⁷⁸

Julius Rosenwald, a part-owner of Sears Roebuck & Company, established the fellowship in 1917. He donated millions towards African American education, among other philanthropic initiatives, and between 1928 and 1948, this resource funded the work of many important black writers, researchers, and intellectuals.¹⁷⁹ According to biographer Peter Ascoli, reading Booker T. Washington’s *Up From Slavery* and John Graham Brook’s *The Life of William Baldwin Jr.*, inspired Rosenwald to focus his philanthropic efforts on black education since both men invested their lives in helping uplift African

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¹⁷⁸ Hine, xxi.
¹⁷⁹ Christopher Harter, Archive Note to Julius Rosenwald papers. University of Chicago Library, Chicago, IL.
Americans through education. However, it was Edwin Embree, the newly hired director of the Rosenwald Fund, that suggested the fellowships focus on fields of special interests like social sciences. As a result, African Americans used the fellowship “to make evident that there was nothing inferior about black people except the opportunities available to them.”

Many of the Rosenwald recipients used their funds to go to Haiti, including DuSable biographers Shirley Graham and Mercer Cook, which speaks to the important idea of Haiti during this period. Author and poet Arna Bontemps used his 1935 fellowship to work on his novel, *Drums at Dusk*, which focused on Toussaint Louverture and the Haitian Revolution. Clarence Cameron White, a violinist and composer from Ohio, spent the summer of 1928 in Haiti which inspired him to write the opera, *Ouanga*, about Haitian voudou. Similarly, William Edouard Scott, Chicago’s dean of African American art, won the Rosenwald in 1931 and chose to spend thirteen months in Haiti to research the “mountain peasant types” of the country. While there, Scott completed over one hundred paintings, including a portrait of Joseph Jeremie, and he sold these paintings in Haiti and across US. He received a Haitian medal of honor in July 1936 from Haitian president Sténio Vincent, who also bought twelve of Scott’s paintings for himself. President Sténio honored Scott’s efforts towards “giving the American public

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180 Peter Ascoli, *Julius Rosenwald: The Man Who Built Sears, Roebuck and Advanced the Cause of Black Education in the American South* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2006), 301-307
184 DePillars, 173-4.
an artist’s view of that beautiful and fascinating country—Haiti,” and Scott saw this as “the crowning point in his career.”

Scott and his art helped to solidify the unique relationship between Haiti and Chicago, and they exemplify the diasporic Midwest in action. The art he created in Haiti left a piece of Chicago there. In the same way, the Haitian art he brought back to Chicago added some of Haiti’s culture to the cityscape. Even before his trip, Scott had a keen awareness of the long history of Haiti-Chicago connections, illustrated in his 1920 painting of DuSable. According to artist Murray DePillars, the painting, “provided a pictorial narrative that challenged the widely-held belief of John Kinzie, a white man, having been Eschikagou’s…earliest non-Native settler.” This painting represents the continued importance of DuSable and Haiti to black consciousness in the city, and it suggests that Scott had been aware of Haiti for some time before his pilgrimage there.

Katherine Dunham, the internationally acclaimed dancer, choreographer, anthropologist, and activist, was arguably the most important Rosenwald recipient who played an integral role in connecting Haiti and Chicago. Polyné asserts that her influence is “key to understanding the intersections of identity, movement, ethnography, and performance in the African American diaspora.” It is a central thesis of this project that black woman stood at the helm of the diaspora-building process, and Dunham’s life and work demonstrates the important role of black women in creating the diasporic links in the Midwest, especially the connections between Haiti and Chicago and the complicated process of diaspora making.

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186 DePillars, 174.
187 Polyné, 158.
Born in Chicago in 1909, Dunham won the Rosenwald in 1935 while studying anthropology at the University of Chicago. She used her funding to conduct studies on Caribbean folk dances in order to understand “the cultural links between the United States and Caribbean,” but she became most enamored of Haiti, where she spent over a year. A course with famed anthropologist Melville Herskovits at Northwestern University inspired her research, and Herskovits linked her with renowned Haitian anthropologist Dr. Jean Price-Mars, President Vincent, and other Haitian officials and scholars. However, Herskovits also advised Dunham to immerse herself into the peasant culture without too much outside influence which indicates the growing belief that authentic Haitian culture was rooted in the black rural majority. “Let me again, however, advise you strongly as I can to go to some locality where there will be no others to “show” you native life and to stay there…get away from “advisers” of all kinds, go to a village, forget Port-au-Prince, evaluations of other students, interpretations of native life, and dig in by yourself somewhere.” It seems Dunham heeded this advice and used the contacts Herskovits gave her to connect with the rural Haitian population. “These local advisors introduced me to native companions, helped me locate living quarters, and

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191 Melville Herskovits to Katherine Dunham, 19 December 1937, Box 1, Folder 3, Katherine Dunham Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.
generally prepared these several communities for my arrival and at the same time gave me sufficient background material or a substantial starting point.”\footnote{The Dances of Haiti, Original Notes, Box 49, Folder 3, Katherine Dunham Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.}

Upon her arrival in Haiti, Dunham learned about the complicated caste system of Haiti, navigating how to fit in with the peasant subjects, despite her fair skin tone, education, and perceived financial status, which would render part of the elite class. Even though the Haitian Revolution eradicated French rule, the colonial divisions based on class and color continued to divide the island. “In Haiti, most Blacks and Mulattoes of the elite are divided by class and color prejudices….it is precisely because of a certain fraternity and coexistence that the atmosphere [on the island] is so poisonous.”\footnote{Lyonel Paquin, \textit{The Haitians: Class and Color Politics} (Brooklyn: Multi-Type, 1983), 10.}

Dunham observed this poisonous division immediately, and in her memoir, \textit{Island Possessed} (1969), she recalled:

\begin{quote}
Of my kind I was a first-a lone young woman easy to place in the clean-cut American dichotomy of color, harder to place in the complexity of Caribbean color classifications; a mulatto when occasion called for, an in-between, or “griffon” actually, I suppose; most of the time an unplaceable [sic], which I prefer to think of as “noir”-not exactly the color black, but the quality of belonging with or being at ease with black people when in the hells or plains or anywhere and scrambling through daily life along with them.\footnote{Katherine Dunham, \textit{Island Possessed} (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1969), 4.}
\end{quote}

According to biographer Joyce Aschenbrenner, Dunham had experienced colorism within her own family, which “launched her impulse to act as an intermediary between classes and races and later as a ‘cultural broker’ for her dancers, her students, and people of different cultures.”\footnote{Joyce Aschenbrenner, \textit{Katherine Dunham: Dancing a Life} (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 7.} This ability also highlights her elite status because as an American
woman with education and some financial means, she could engage in matters of social and cultural influence.

One way Dunham bridged the gap between the elite and underclass of Haiti with her culminating performance at the Rex Theatre in 1936, where some scholars suggest she subtly infused *voudou* ritual dance practices into her dance piece despite discouragement from the theatre’s management.\textsuperscript{196} This performance coincided with a growing indigenous and negritude movement in Haiti, when scholars like Dr. Price Mars called for Haitians to turn back towards their indigenous, rural culture in order to reclaim their “authentic” selves.\textsuperscript{197} The performance was well received, evidenced by a letter Dunham received from a Haitian journalist. “You have been the glory of that magnificent evening. The smooth, natural, and inspiring manner which is yours in the execution of your dances proved to me and all others your genius…you are just a great promise for our race.”\textsuperscript{198} Dunham’s Rex performance not only showed her immersion into Haitian culture but also her commitment to sharing that culture as a way to connect people of African descent across class status and nationality. She continued to work as an intermediary between Haiti and Chicago for the rest of her life.

Dunham also stereotyped and exoticized Haitian culture. For example, in her early field notes, she described her early impression of the Haitian people:

I find the people on this blessed country utterly, thoroughly, totally insane…It is only among the people who are under pressure from the socially ruling groups that we find anything like sanity as our civilization knows it…..I have been told that a foreigner could live all of his life in Haiti, and not understand Haiti. That to me, is nothing to boast of, only another indication that by all outside standards the

\textsuperscript{196} Ramsey, 58-9.
\textsuperscript{197} See DuBois and Polyné.
\textsuperscript{198} Rene Rosenoud to Katherine Dunham, 3 April 1936, Box 1, Folder 4, Katherine Dunham Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.
country thinks upside down and backward. Utterly unpredictable and unanalyzable.\textsuperscript{199}

She blamed the Haitian elite for this backwardness, noting that their use of the peasantry as servants was like the “household slave ancestors before Toussaint and Dessalines and Christophe waded through the blood of the revolution to free them.”\textsuperscript{200} Moreover, she provided a gendered critique of Haitian men, calling their sexual promiscuity “an expression of the desire to dominate and a need for support of an ego which is always on the verge of crashing because of the precarious economic and political situation of the country.”\textsuperscript{201} Dunham’s scathing view of the Haitian elite, especially elite men, highlights her focus on the Haitian peasantry, her experiences within the Haitian caste system, and her own experiences as a woman of color from the US. She utilized many of the same stereotypes that Americans promoted about Haiti as a backwards place inundated by poverty and division. Also, her praise of the Haitian peasantry in contrast to the elite also exoticized them, situating them as the pure and authentic part of Haitian culture, as if they had not also been impacted by the economics and turmoil of the country.

Dunham’s focus on voudou also represented a stereotypical and exoticized view of Haiti. In her opinion, voudou was “the blood-stream of Haitian peasant psychology…and the complex surrounding the \textit{vaudun} reaches well into the economic, social, and political life in Haiti,” again reinforcing the belief that the Haitian peasantry and \textit{voudou} represented the real Haiti.\textsuperscript{202} During her study, she was initiated into the religion through a \textit{lave-tete} ceremony, similar to a Catholic baptism. She described the

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{199} Notes on Haiti ca 1937, Box 79, Folder 5, Katherine Dunham Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.
\textsuperscript{200} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{201} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{202} The Dances of Haiti, Original Notes, Box 49, Folder 3, Katherine Dunham Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.
\end{flushleft}
ceremony in great detail in her memoir, noting the sense of belonging that she gained from the experience: “I was deep in the most banal, and, at the same time, most esoteric of secret society inductions, that into ceremony, ritual, secret pact, blood sacrifice, into vaudun or voodoo of Haiti.203 Again, Dunham’s use of exotic language—banal, esoteric, secret, blood sacrifice—reinforces stereotypical ideas of Haiti. However, Dunham biographer Joyce Aschenbrenner argues that this stereotypical view of Haiti changed as the performer spent more time on the island: “Her conception has been modified through the years as her knowledge has increased, and it reflects much of the reality of the Haitian’s homeland.”204

Dunham formed a deep bond with Haiti and Haitians which would last over her lifetime. She traveled to Haiti several more times over the 1930s and 40s and eventually bought a home there in 1949, known as Habitation Leclerc. The forty-five-acre property which had once belonged to Pauline Bonaparte, Napoleon’s sister, and Charles Leclerc, the French general who attempted to quell the Haitian Revolution, became Dunham’s Haitian home and the headquarters for her dance company when they were not on tour.205 She also worked closely with Haitian performers, like Papa Augustin and Jean Leone Destine.206 Through these relationships, Dunham, a Chicagoan, went beyond the idea of Haiti by living with and studying Haitian life and culture, especially dance and religion. She brought these first-hand experiences--the reality of Haiti--back to Chicago and the United States with her and espoused them through dance and through text. Dunham published several books based on her Haitian experiences, including her Master’s thesis

203 Dunham, 79.
204 Aschenbrenner, 58-9.
205 Flyer on Habitation Leclerc, Box 51, Folder 1, Katherine Dunham Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.
206 See Polyné.
The Dances of Haiti and the memoir Island Possessed. She also remained committed to
the plight of Haitians and would undergo a hunger strike in the 1990s to protest the
treatment of the Haitian refugees. These initiatives served as opportunities for the idea of
Haiti to grow in Chicago and vice versa.

The Rosenwald Fellowship is key in understanding the transmission of culture
between Haiti and Chicago during the post-occupation period. Many of the Rosenwald
recipients, like Scott and Dunham, testified to the transformative nature of their time in
Haiti, so much so that there was an explosion of Haitian inspired art, dance, music,
literature, and theatre in this period which would help shape black culture in Chicago.207
As Elizabeth Chin notes, “there can be little doubt…of the influence the Rosenwald
Foundation had upon the cultural scene of Chicago and its importance in supporting key
African American artists in developing their crafts.”208 Because many of these artists
went to Haiti, this particular location played an important role in how they saw
themselves and strengthened the historical bonds between Chicago and Haiti.

Diasporic Medicine: Provident Hospital and the University of Chicago

The Rosenwald Fellowship also financed doctors going abroad to further their
medical training and helped foster diasporic connections between Haiti and Chicago
during the post-occupation period. An April 1934 Defender article lauded the Rosenwald
for giving three hundred sixty-three “race members” fellowships in three years, including
physicians from Provident and University of Chicago hospitals.209 Provident Hospital
was the first black owned and operated hospital in the United States and the primary way
for black Chicagoans to receive medical care during the twentieth century. Born out of

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207 See Schulman.
208 Chin, xiv.
209 “363 Race Members Given Fellowships in 3 Years,” Chicago Defender, April 14, 1934.
necessity due to rampant segregation in Chicago, Provident is one example of the black owned and managed institutions established in this era. Dr. Daniel Hale Williams, the black surgeon credited for performing the first successful open heart surgery, founded the hospital in 1891, and it was also the site of the first nursing school for black women. Provident partnered with the University of Chicago between 1929 and 1944 to further black medical education, and these two hospitals proved foundational to creating the Haitian diaspora over the next several decades. The medical field played a critical role in the creation of the Haitian diaspora in Chicago and shaped this community to its largely middle-class and professional character.

Dr. Camille Lhérrison, a medical professor at the Medical University of Haiti and the Haitian Minister of Health minister, exemplifies how the diasporic connections formed between black medical professionals in Chicago and Haiti. In February 1942, Lhérrison spoke at the Good Shepherd Community House in Chicago and visited with University of Chicago doctors and administrators as part of a cultural exchange program sponsored by the U.S. State department. In his speech, Lhérrison “took occasion to stress the warmth of feeling which existed in Haiti among its leaders from President Lescot on down toward the American Negro.” Specifically, Lhérrison described the diasporic connections between Haitians and African Americans and “urged a closer bond of understanding” due to these connections. Lhérrison also shed light on the misinformation that inhibited this bond, calling out the media and various travelogue authors who sensationalized and exoticised his home country and culture, including...

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210 “Provident Hospital,” Encyclopedia of Chicago.
211 Ibid.
212 “Haiti Visitor in Chicago on Culture Tour,” Chicago Defender, February 14, 1942.
213 Ibid.
214 Ibid.
William Seabrook and Zora Neale Hurston. He blamed Hurston’s publisher for perverting her work: “Zora Neale Hurston’s “Go Tell My Horse” had been excellent when she finished her manuscript in Haiti but that before being published it had been changed a deal and turned into the same sort of sensationalism which characterized Seabrook.”

This critique highlights not only the awareness that Lhérrison and other Haitians had of how they were portrayed in the United States but also firmly places the blame on mainstream (white) America. Lhérrison deemed it important to dispel these myths by describing what life in Haiti was really like and noted that “Haiti was proud of her African blood and that one of the requirements before one could become a Haitian citizen was that he be of Negro blood.”

Lhérrison’s agenda was clear; he was on a mission to dispel a negative and stereotypical idea of Haiti in the mind of Chicagoans and instead replace it with a more authentic portrayal that placed blackness and commonality at its core.

Lhérrison’s agenda also exemplifies diaspora in the making; his agenda indicates that diasporas are made through dialogue and action. Thee popular image of Haiti was one of intrigue and backwardness, and because Lhérrison addressed a black audience on this matter, it suggests his awareness that African Americans also believed these stereotypes. His critique of Hurston, while ultimately deemed to be an issue with the publisher, also sheds a light on the fissures and disconnections between Haitians and African Americans. That he felt compelled to call for a closer bond and more understanding between the two groups shows how diasporic connections are achieved.

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215 Ibid.
216 Ibid.
While this was not Lhérison’s first time in the United States (he graduated from Harvard University), it was his first visit to Chicago, and his stay represented the growing Haitian recognition of Chicago as an important hub of black life. Lhérrison had friends in Chicago, including his host, Horace R. Cayton, a graduate of the University of Chicago and the co-author of the 1945 seminal Chicago text, *Black Metropolis*. Lhérrison had other Chicago connections as well: he served as one of Katherine Dunham guides during her 1935-36 stay in Haiti and Claude Barnett, president of the Associated Negro Press (ANP).\(^{217}\) Barnett wrote to Lhérrison after his Good Shephard address, thanking him for his words and sent well wishes to Haitian President Élie Lescot, “telling him of our warm admiration of him.”\(^{218}\) These connections suggests that Lhérrison’s visit to Chicago was based on an invitation or two and highlights how medical travel strengthened the bonds between Haitians and Chicagoans.

Female physicians also took part in the diasporic medical exchange including Dr. Yolande Thomas and Dr. Victoire Lespinasse. These two women used the Second American Congress on OBGYN in April 1942 as an opportunity to find out new ways to help women of color get better care across the U.S.-Caribbean world. This conference was part of a growing demand and need for modernized health care in the 1940s, and for women, this meant more autonomy over the child-birth process. Dr. Thomas was a twenty-seven-year-old obstetrician who was only the second woman to graduate from the University of Port-au-Prince.\(^{219}\) This accomplishment propelled her to become one of the international delegates to the convention, which included doctors from Ecuador, Puerto

\(^{217}\) Dunham, 11.
\(^{218}\) Claude Barnett to Camille Lhérrison, 14 February 1942, Box 203, Folder 5, Claude Barnett Papers, Chicago History Museum.
\(^{219}\) “Haitian Woman Doctor at U.S. Convention,” *Chicago Defender*, April 18, 1942.
Rico, and Brazil. This was not a temporary stay for Thomas, however; she was scheduled to work at Provident Hospital as part of her appointment. By accepting a position at this prominent black hospital, Thomas represented how the early Chicago Haitian diaspora took shape.

Dr. Lespinasse served as Dr. Thomas’ convention guest because the women had a great deal in common despite being from different countries. Lespinasse was a Chicago native and graduate of Northwestern Medical School. Like Thomas, she was a pioneer in her field as one of only four women to graduate from Northwestern in 1930. Remembered as an “early advocate of natural childbirth and paternal participation in childbirth,” Lespinasse served underprivileged communities across the Chicagoland area. Moreover, Lespinasse was known for her affinity for the French language and culture and was a member of several French language societies. Thus, these two women connected across an array of topics as black women who pursued medical careers despite the barriers. The conference served as a space for women across the diasporic Midwest to come together in a common mission: to better serve the medical needs of women of color. Thomas and Lespinasse are examples of how black women and doctors built the connections between Haiti and Chicago.

Providence Hospital hired other Haitian doctors during this period, including two graduates from the University of Haiti, Dr. André Renaud and Dr. Durand Leonard. Renaud did his residency in obstetrics at Kansas City General Hospital, and Leonard had

220 Ibid.
222 Ibid.
223 Ibid.
been working at Provident’s emergency room since late July 1949.\textsuperscript{224} These international hires are another example of the importance of the medical field to deepening the connection between Haiti and Chicago. During a Caribbean tour in 1952, African American doctors from the University of Chicago and Provident Hospital lauded Haiti as a place that opened doors for both Haitians and African Americans to practice medicine.\textsuperscript{225}

Dr. Eugene J. Chesrow is another example of a Chicago doctor and medical professor who became deeply connected Haiti through medical travel. In September 1948, Chesrow received a Legion of Honor for his previous medical work in Haiti and “his service in fostering Haitian-American relations.”\textsuperscript{226} This work included managing well-known Haitian professor and tour guide Maurice Sixto’s glaucoma surgery in 1948. “Chesrow arranged for Sixto’s transportation to the United States early this year. He assumed responsibility for the Haitian during his American stay and provided hospitalization.”\textsuperscript{227} Chesrow served as intermediary for a Haitian patient in Chicago and then continued to return to Haiti, connecting the two spaces between his medical travel. In 1950, Chesrow returned to Haiti as an “exchange professor of surgery” at the University of Haiti, and these instances highlight how the medical profession provided numerous opportunity for travel between Haiti and Chicago which black doctors took full advantage of.\textsuperscript{228}

Dr. Ulysses Grant Dailey, a medical professor at Northwestern and Dr. Daniel Hale William’s assistant at Provident Hospital in the 1910s also had deep ties to Haiti in

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{224} “Two Haitian Doctors Now at Provident,” \textit{The Afro-American}, August 20, 1949.
\item \textsuperscript{225} “Haitians Entertain American Doctors,” \textit{Chicago Defender}, May 24, 1952.
\item \textsuperscript{226} “Haiti Bestows High Honors on Two Physicians,” \textit{Chicago Daily Tribune}, September 26, 1948.
\item \textsuperscript{227} Ibid
\item \textsuperscript{228} “Dr. E.J. Chesrow Named to University of Haiti,” \textit{Chicago Daily Tribune}, August 8, 1949.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
the 1940s and 1950s. During his career, Dailey traveled to Haiti various times, and his papers reveal how deeply entrenched he became in Haitian life during the 1940s and 1950s. At the end of 1944, Dailey spent four weeks in Haiti and the Dominican Republic on a medical excursion. He visited various hospitals and medical schools where he gave lectures and performed surgeries. Because he was fluent in French, Dailey felt comfortable in Haiti, and “he [was] loud in his praise of the culture and hospitality which he had an opportunity to witness firsthand.”229 Dailey’s affinity for Haiti, in particular the Haitian elite, continued through his correspondence with Haitian physicians. In 1947, Dailey received a letter from Souheil Laham, an administrator at Le Caducée, requesting medical books from the University of Chicago. “We students are suffering enormously from a lack of material equipment and of competent professors as you.”230 Laham also told Dailey of his brother, a surgeon in Paris preparing for his fellowship year, in case there was need for a surgeon at Provident. In his response, Dailey urged Laham to write directly to the University of Chicago Biological School for the books. To Laham’s job referral, Dailey told him that there was a high demand to work at Provident but “Haiti has however our special interest.”231 Dailey and many of his cohort did have a special interest in Haiti, which kept the idea of Haiti prevalent in their mind during this period.

Dailey traveled to Haiti again in 1950 and wrote to Barnett detailing his time there. Dailey gave lectures at the University of Haiti on the techniques of stomach ulcer surgery, which was attended by many prominent Haitian doctors. Dailey also performed ulcer procedures and noted that his interest in Haiti began when he connected with

230 Souheil Laham to U.G. Dailey, 4 October 1947, Box 4, Folder 33, Ulysses Grant Dailey Papers, Vivian Harsh Collection, Carter G. Woodson Library.
231 Ibid.
Haitian students while in medical school in Paris, highlighting his elite ties to Haiti.\textsuperscript{232} This correspondence suggests that there was a dialogue between black Chicagoans about their frequent travel to Haiti and the impact it had on their lives. Eventually, Dailey became the Haitian consul in Chicago showing the growth of the Haitian community in the Windy City. In an essay titled “Honorary Consul to Haiti in Chicago,” Dailey described the honor but difficulties associated with his position.

Man calls up and says, ‘I want to go to Haiti, I have something to give them” and Dailey says “What a minute, maybe they have something to give you” - I always feel I am “sharing experiences” when I go; it is a common fault of American visitors abroad to look down other cultures.\textsuperscript{233} This quote highlights the difficulties Dailey dealt with as consul; trying to change people’s perception of Haiti from a place that simply needed help. Like Lhérrison, he sought to promote Haiti as a place where black people could gain a better awareness of themselves and the world. His dedication to Haiti continued into during the later years of his life, and he moved to island in 1956 to retire. This sojourn was short-lived however, and Dailey came back to Chicago five years later after he fell ill. He died shortly after his return.\textsuperscript{234} Dailey’s life is another example of how Haiti and Chicago remained connected in the diasporic Midwest through the professional and personal travel of medical professionals.

For black medical professionals, the opportunity to travel between Haiti and Chicago during the post-occupation period shaped and reshaped not only how they practiced medicine but also how they viewed themselves and the world around them.

\textsuperscript{232} Ulysses Grant Dailey to Claude Barnett, 7 April 1950, Box 203, Folder 6, Claude Barnett Papers, Chicago History Museum.
\textsuperscript{233} Honorary Consul to Haiti in Chicago, 1955, Box 204, Folder 233, Ulysses Grant Dailey Papers, Vivian Harsh Collection, Carter G. Woodson Library.
\textsuperscript{234} Ulysses Grant Dailey papers inventory, Box 34, Vivian Harsh Collection, Carter G. Woodson Library.
Provident Hospital, often remembered for its important role in the black community in Chicago, was a haven for black diasporic connections to form along with the University of Chicago and other Chicago educational and medical institutions. Therefore, in order to understand how the Haitian diaspora in Chicago formed, it is critical to examine the role of doctors who traveled between the two spaces during the 1940s and 1950s. That this diaspora is largely middle-class and professional is a testament to the role of the medical field in its creation and the pull factors that brought Haitians to Chicago. Finally, these examples shed light on the role of black elite men in the creation of this diaspora.

**Diasporic Feminism: Elodie de Wendt, Feminine League of Social Action, and Black Clubwomen in Chicago**

While black men in the medical field built connections with each other across the African diaspora, black women did the same in order to better their status worldwide. Elodie de Wendt is one of the earliest first generation Haitian-Americans in Chicago who helped facilitate a cultural exchange between the two societies over her lifetime. De Wendt’s father was William Carl de Wendt, a Haitian immigrant who came to the United States in 1903. He married Bertha Veazey, an African American in Chicago in 1912, and shortly afterward befriended Robert Abbott of the *Chicago Defender* because of Abbott’s “interest in Negroes from other countries.” 235 After moving from Chicago and New Orleans, Mr. de Wendt relocated his family back to Haiti in 1943 for work. While in Haiti, Ms. de Wendt taught at the Normal School of Haiti, and in 1946, she returned to the States to pursue advanced study in her field, education. 236 Her sister, Yvonne, had already returned to Chicago and married an African American attorney there, and this likely helped Elodie transition back into life in Chicago.

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236 Ibid.
Elodie de Wendt’s story highlights many of the critical components of the Haitian diaspora in Chicago in the latter half of the twentieth century. William de Wendt was of Danish and Haitian descent, which suggests his mixed-race and elite status and explains why he would have had the access to migrate to Chicago before the U.S. occupation took place. Many of the earliest migrants to Chicago were middle-class and educated, and this trend defined this diaspora. His marriage to an African American woman was common of Haitian migrants in Chicago; the Chicago census data on Haitians living in Chicago during the early 1900s shows that many of them were part of intra-racial and interethnic marriages. These marriages expose another way that African Americans and Haitians formed connections over the twentieth century, through love and marriage. The product of these relationships (in this case, Elodie and Yvonne) explain how blackness in early Chicago included various African diasporic cultures, even within one household. Further, the de Wendt family were reverse migrants; William returned to the homeland and took his African American wife and Haitian American daughters there. The two girls eventually returned to Chicago, which indicates the cyclical nature of diasporas, the coeval relationship between the homeland and hostland achieved through travel back and forth between the two spaces. Finally, Abbott’s friendship with the family “because of his interest in Negroes from other countries” affirms his role in bridging the gap between Chicago and Haiti during this era.\textsuperscript{237} He and Elodie de Wendt continued to work together on this mission.

After her return to Chicago, Elodie de Wendt became Mrs. Alan Lane (who was likely an African American man), and she became a key figure in helping Chicago become an important enclave for Haitian-American diasporic culture. In May 1951, she

\textsuperscript{237} Ibid.
worked with Claude Barnett and the Friends of Haiti, a group with chapters in New York and Chicago created in order to foster better relations between Haitians and African Americans to bring a Haitian folklore dance group to perform at the *Chicago Tribune* Music Festival. According to historian Monica Reed, the Tribune’s music festival was the most popular outdoor concert in early twentieth century Chicago and “a venue for cultural exchange during the Jim Crow era.” Later that year, in September 1951, Mrs. de Wendt Lane hosted a group of Haitian women who stopped in Chicago as part of a 10,000 mile US “pleasure tour.” These women included Madame Pierre Tardieu, “prominent in the social life of Port-au-Prince,” her daughter, Danielle, Carmen Consolat, and Madeline Bourelly. Bourelly’s brother was married to de Wendt Lane’s sister, Yvonne, again highlighting the importance of family and intermarriage in creating diaspora. These instances exemplify diaspora in action and how black women took the lead in creating these bonds across space.

De Wendt Lane continued to bring black women together across the diaspora as a way for them to collaborate on their efforts towards gender equality. During the summer of 1952, she served as the hostess and interpreter for Marie-Thérèse Colimon, Haitian educator, author, and feminist, during her visit to Chicago. Colimon was a member of the Ligue Féminine d’Action Sociale or the Feminine League of Social Action (FLSA), the first and largest feminist organization in Haiti. Jeanne Bouchereau and Alice Cheyan Garoute, both of whom were educated in the United States, founded the organization in 238 Elodie de Wendt Lane to Claude Barnett, 20 May 1951, Box 203, Folder 7, Claude Barnett Papers, Chicago History Museum.


1934 just after the U.S. occupation ended. The FLSA’s mission was to improve the lives of Haitian women and children, politically, socially, and economically. This mission expanded across the diaspora as FLSA members, like Bouchereau and Colimon, traveled to and from Chicago during the 1940s and 1950s and thereby helped facilitate a dialogue about expanding black women’s rights transnationally.

Bouchereau’s visit with de Wendt Lane in 1951 was not her first visit to Chicago; in May 1947, Bouchereau addressed three hundred clubwomen in Chicago at the sixth annual All Women’s Dinner held at the Wabash YMCA. In her speech entitled, “Haiti and the Negro Woman,” Bouchereau “surveyed the cultural and socioeconomic position of the Haitian woman and made analogy with the very favorable social position of the American woman.” The goal of the dinner was to create “a more sympathetic understanding and [to promote] a clearer fellowship among women in the community,” and by having Bouchereau as their keynote, this signaled a diasporic vision of this community that chairwoman Mildred Whitney Allen and YMCA board member Gertrude Cyrus likely envisioned. According to Meis Knupfer, black clubwomen in Chicago during the Black Chicago Renaissance studied literature and black history through a pan-African lens in order to “reflect race pride and progress.” Boucheareau’s presence at this event reflects this pan-African awareness and highlights the important idea of Haiti within this consciousness.

Myrtle Sengstacke, wife of Robert Abbott’s heir, John Sengstacke, visited the FLSA while in Haiti in August 1951. As an important member of Chicago’s black

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243 Ibid.
244 Knupfer, 103.
community and a relative of Abbott, Sengstacke likely encountered de Wendt Lane and Bouchereau in the late 1940s and early 1950s. She visited the FLSA as part of her Haiti trip, and these black women bonded over their shared initiatives across the diaspora. After her departure, FLSA member Jeante Desgraves-Mylacin wrote to Sengstacke to thank her for her visit which left a lasting impression on the group. “Since your departure, we have oftenly thought of your group which is so composed of so charming people.” Mylacin encouraged Sengstacke to return to Haiti as soon as she could for a longer stay and shared a warm message from the FLSA: “They thank you very much for your wishes and they have made me their interpreter to send you their very best regards.” This letter, which seems to be in response to one Sengstacke sent upon her return to Chicago, emphasizes the effort black women made in both Haiti and Chicago to build friendships through travel and correspondence.

Bouchereau returned to Chicago in January 1952, this time to speak to members of the Delta Sigma Theta sorority at the University of Chicago. She again focused her keynote on the status of Haitian women and argued that the conditions created the prime time for Haitian women to seize their proper place in society. “Through this increase in social action, the Haitian woman prepares herself to assume a more prominent place in the international scene.” Bouchereau referenced the impact of the 1946 sociopolitical revolution in Haiti, which Matthew Smith argues opened up opportunities for a black nationalist and radical agenda like that of the FLSA’s to take form. That is, the

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245 Jeante Desgraves-Mylacin to Myrtle Sengstacke, 31 August 1951, Box 237, Folder 2, Robert Abbott Papers, Vivian Harsh Collection, Carter G. Woodson Library.
246 Ibid.
revolution of 1946 in Haiti created space for more Haitians to take part in the country’s politics, including women. Therefore, Bouchereau’s affiliation with the Deltas (she became an honorary member in 1951) symbolized the influence of radical politics in Haiti on black women’s consciousness during the post-occupation period. The women of FLSA then shared this influence with the black clubwomen of Chicago who were also engaging in their own elite feminist activism. Most important, de Wendt Lane attended Bouchereau’s speech, which suggests that a friendship existed between the two women. Their relationship likely led to Colimon’s stay with de Wendt Lane a few months later, in August 1952.

Colimon visited Chicago as the FLSA ramped up its campaign for Haitian women’s suffrage. Despite some setbacks, the FLSA was committed to the “struggle for political recognition.”249 Like de Wendt Lane, who was now teaching at a Chicago public school, Colimon was an educator who co-founded École Boisson, “the largest private school” in Haiti with her sister Jean Blosson.250 According to scholar Marie-Denise Shelton, Colimon is remembered as the “dean of Haitian women’s writers” who investigated the struggle of women, loss, separation, and hope of the diaspora in her writings.251 Since she spent a month in Chicago, it is fair to assume that Colimon gained inspiration for her writing from the artists and writers of the Black Chicago Renaissance. Colimon and de Wendt Lane also continued their friendship after Colimon returned to

249 Haitian Educator-Author Sparks Move for Women’s Rights in Haiti,” Chicago Defender, August 9, 1952.
250 Ibid.
251 Marie-Denise Shelton, “Haitian Women’s Fiction,” Callaloo 15 (Summer 1992), 775.
Haiti. Upon his return from a trip to Haiti, Barnett apologized to Colimon for not making it to École Boisson to visit her and noted that “Mrs. Lane is well and sends love.”

Black women, both Haitian and American born, were at the center of the diaspora making process in Chicago. They seized the post-occupation and post-World War II period of possibility and radicalism to create and expand the struggle for black women’s rights. The coalition between the FLSA and black clubwomen in Chicago suggests that Haitian ideas about feminism helped to shape understandings of African American women’s feminism in the late twentieth century and vice versa. Further, de Wendt Lane is evidence of a Haitian diaspora that began to take shape in this era. Educational opportunity was key for de Wendt Lane; it is what brought her back to Chicago, and this was the case for many of the Haitian immigrants who would migrate to the Windy City. Moreover, familial and kinship connections from Haiti played a pivotal role in how the diaspora slowly formed in Chicago, also seen in de Wendt Lane’s case. Her network began with her sister, expanded to include her sister-in-law, and then other black women with similar values, beliefs, and experiences. She actively sought to bring together the duality of her experience as a Chicago-born Haitian woman who grew up in Haiti and returned to Chicago, and she did this by bringing in women from Haiti to engage in dialogue with black women in Chicago. These moments of convergence represent diaspora-in-the-making and influenced understandings of gender in both Haiti and Chicago.

Ms. Chicago Defender: Diasporic Ambassadors in the Post-Occupation Period

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While Haitian women consistently traveled to Chicago during the 1940s and 1950s, African American women from the diasporic Midwest traveled to Haiti and became diasporic ambassadors. The *Chicago Defender* continued to be an important vehicle in the development of the Haitian diaspora in Chicago, and its Ms. Defender contest during the early 1950s represents another way this occurred. This contest exemplifies how black diasporic women, including Caribbean organizer Claudia Jones, used beauty pageants and carnivals as spaces to connect black women.\(^{253}\) Specifically, this contest turned black women into diasporic ambassadors whose experiences in the country reshaped how they thought about themselves and the world around them.

The newspaper announced the first Ms. Defender contest on March 25, 1950. Introduced as a popularity contest, it was described as “colossal,” since the main purpose of the contest was to gain readership (much like the BBC and other *Defender* initiatives).\(^{254}\) Equally important, it provided its female readers with “the chance to meet many of the colorful figures of the world,” particularly Haitians.\(^{255}\) In order to participate, contestants had to send in entry forms, sign as many people up as they could for newspaper subscriptions, and then garner as many votes as possible within a three month window to win the grand prize: a trip to Chicago, Washington D.C., and Haiti, $10,000, and other prizes. While there were hundreds of prizes awarded, the top three winners would take the trip.

The article focused on the trip to Haiti as the most exciting part of the prize, which suggests the growing importance of Haiti to Abbott and the other *Defender* staff.

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\(^{254}\) “A Trip to Chicago, Washington D.C., and to Haiti, Plus A Packard 8, Plus a $500 Wardrobe is Just One Prize!,” *Chicago Defender*, March 25, 1950.

\(^{255}\) Ibid.
“Haiti, land of love and loss, nestling in the bosom of the lower Antilles, is steeped in the Home of the great King Christophe and Toussaint L’Ouverture who stopped the army of the great Napoleon.”\textsuperscript{256} Not only was Haiti’s rich history enticing, it was also its modern charm: “The lucky visitors will have a chance to contrast the old with the new in this Caribbean [country], to see its many modern buildings and eloquent pavilions while at the same time experiencing their dated but vanishing belief in \textit{voodooism} and black magic.”\textsuperscript{257} This colorful language was not only a device to entice its female readers to participate in the contest, it also spoke to the perpetual idea of Haiti, which both revered and exoticised the culture. Haiti represented a space for Americans—both black and white—to grapple with what it meant to be modern in the burgeoning Cold War era. With its modern architecture and vanishing \textit{voudou}, it embodied a juxtaposition between the process of black advancement and ideas of modernity against.

The contest caused a major stir immediately and garnered support from black leaders including Barnett and Janet Harmon, the first black women to hold a commercial pilot license and a Chicago migrant, who would editorialize their experiences in Haiti to further embed the idea of Haiti into the consciousness of their female readers. After all, “what woman wouldn’t work for the chance to dance under a Haitian moon to throbbing music of native orchestras”?\textsuperscript{258} A few weeks after the contest was announced, Claude Barnett wrote a piece for \textit{The Defender} about the “entertaining and colorful” Haiti which would be “a dream come true for [the] lucky girls” who would win the Ms. Defender grand prize.

\textsuperscript{256} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{257} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{258} Ibid.
Barnett had just gotten back from attending the Bi-Centennial Exposition in Haiti, which was one part of newly elected Haitian President Dumarsais Estimé’s mission to promote Haitian culture and development to an international audience and thereby gain economic support especially from African Americans. Estimé was the first black (not mixed-race) president in Haiti in the post-occupation period. His election was a product of the 1946 Haitian Revolution which explains why civil rights figures like Barnett and Marian Anderson attended the Exposition.\(^{259}\) Barnett’s wife, Etta Moten, was invited to sing in a series of performances as part of the Exposition, and the couple deemed the trip to be “a most pleasant and stimulating one.”\(^{260}\) He wrote to Estimé after they left the Exposition, thanking him for the invitation and saying that the experience turned the couple into “devout admirers of Haiti,” so much so that they brought back baskets and drums to commemorate the trip.\(^{261}\) This trip sparked Barnett and Moten’s lifelong relationship with Haiti, its culture, and its people.

Barnett continued to sing the praises of Haiti, noting again that “Haiti wants particularly…Negro business people with capital and know-how.”\(^{262}\) In return, African Americans would finally be able to experience “the promised land,” a place where everyone looked like them. “An interesting feeling fills the breast of a colored American as he moves about a country like Haiti, whose officials from top to bottom are Negro. The hearty welcome which Haitians give to people of color, their feeling of oneness…their innate courtesy, makes one feel right at home.”\(^{263}\) This language of

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\(^{260}\) Claude Barnett to Dumarsais Estimé, 25 March 1950, Box 203, Folder 6, Claude Barnett Papers, Chicago History Museum.

\(^{261}\) Ibid.


\(^{263}\) Ibid.
diaspora—oneness, home—highlights the importance of the burgeoning fellowship between Haitians and African Americans during this era which laid the groundwork for Haitians to view Chicago as a welcome place to migrate.

Janet Harmon provided a similar overview of Haiti in a May 1950 *Defender* article, and her perspective seemed to speak to the female readers and Ms. Defender contestants in particular. A nurse and aviator, Harmon went to Haiti for a well-needed vacation: “no place could be more deal for perfect relaxation and a place to make you forget a broken love affair.”\(^{264}\) Harmon traveled with a friend, Mary Langford, and the two women were the guests of a Haitian woman named Susie Harris. The fact that the three women were in Haiti alone seems to speak to the perceived safety of the island, and this detail likely quelled the Ms. Defender contestants’ fears about traveling to a foreign country. Harmon described meeting some nice, handsome Haitian men on the flight, which she described as getting the vacation “off to a good start.”\(^{265}\) She described the beauty of the Haitian landscape and architecture, “one of the most fascinating lands one could ever visit…a land of utter natural beauty, carefree simplicity.”\(^{266}\) Harmon’s female perspective, as promoted by the newspaper, shows how important Haiti was to the Ms. Defender experience and how black women shaped the idea of Haiti in Chicago. Harmon exemplifies the important role black women played in creating bonds between Haiti and Chicago, using the *Chicago Defender* as the medium to form these connections.

On July 8, 1950, Yvette Edmonds, Marian Nathaniel, and Ann Hughes were announced as the three grand prize winners of the first contest. Edmonds, the first-place winner, was a school clerk from Chicago, as was Hughes, the third-place winner and an

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265 Ibid.
266 Ibid.
entrepreneur from the south side of the city. Nathaniel, the second-place winner, worked for an investment firm in Detroit, Michigan. The fact that all three women hailed from the Midwest and traveled to Haiti again highlights the diasporic nature of the Midwest. Over five million votes were cast in the first contest, and Edmonds garnered a half a million votes to defeat the more than four hundred contestants who entered suggesting a large interest in the contest and in Haiti. The three women took off on their trip a week later with Venice Spraggs, a Defender correspondent, as their chaperone. They were sent off by Chicago Mayor Martin H. Kennelly as “ambassadors of goodwill,” terminology that suggests the contest was bigger than a popularity contest and had sociopolitical motives.267

Upon their return, all four women, including Spraggs, attested to the transformative nature of their experience in Haiti. For instance, Spraggs described it as an “Alice in Wonderland visit,” and “the crowning experience of their entire lives.”268 The Haitian officials welcomed the women as “our sisters from the United States who are children of the same African mother.”269 This welcome set the tone for the trip, which would introduce the women to Haiti’s rich culture. The food, music, and dance were most memorable, as were the people themselves. Edmonds described the vivid imagery of the Haitian market, filled with peasant women with baskets perched on their heads full of product to sell. The trip was not all pleasure, and the women also learned about the various development projects the country was pursuing, especially in the fields of education, architecture, agriculture, and health. These issues were similar to ones that the

269 Ibid.
blacks in Chicago faced, so it is likely that the contest winners saw these parallels. Thus, the commonalities across the diasporic Midwest were a major part of what made the trip transformative; knowing that as a black person, you were not alone in the struggle for access and recognition.

The success of the first Ms. Defender contest inspired the newspaper to run the contest at least two more times. The paper announced the second annual contest in March 1951, and the Haitian vacation remained the top feature among the other prizes. Again, the paper targeted well-connected black female readers, noting that “if you are a member of a club or organization of any kind, get them to boost you in your community. That will enhance your chance of winning.”\(^{270}\) This detail indicates that the paper was looking for black clubwomen and other women active in the community to apply for the contest and become diasporic ambassadors. The article also included a picture of the previous year’s winner, Yvette Edmonds, calling her a “celebrity overnight.”\(^{271}\) The second contest spoke to the success of the first year, and they hoped to have similar results.

By July, three winners were announced: Susie Goodloe of Louisiana, Sara Powell Hamilton of Chicago, and Marian Nathaniel (one of the first year’s winners). The Haitian press seemed equally as invested in creating these connections created by this contest, shown by their coverage of the Ms. Defender visit in their newspapers. In *Le Matin*, a popular newspaper, the winners were lauded as the three grand winners among four hundred black American female contests (“*les trois gagnantes du concours auquel participerent 400 femmes negres-americaines*”) and noted that the FLSA held a reception

\(^{270}\) “Chicago Defender Officially Opens Giant $10,000 Popularity Contest,” *Chicago Defender*, March 24, 1951.

\(^{271}\) Ibid.
for the women. Sengastacke and Spraggs accompanied the women on their trip, and in an article for the *Haiti Sun*, Spraggs noted the important mission of the trip:

Efforts by the Chicago Defender to build a greater understanding between Negro Americans and the people of Haiti were strengthened here Wednesday when Mme. Paul E. Magloire...crowned Mrs. Susie Goodloe of Chatham, La. as the Defender’s goodwill ambassador to the Republic in a simple ceremony at the presidential mansion witnessed by President Magloire and a small group of Haitian officials.

This ceremony again demonstrates that the Ms. Defender contest provided a moment of diasporic connection and put black women as the central players of this engagement. The women also connected with another important player in the Chicago-Haiti diaspora on their visit, Katherine Dunham, who performed for them during their visit.

The third contest launched in a similar fashion in 1953, and the rhetoric around this contest uncovered a new aspect of the idea of Haiti: a place for autonomous romance and sexuality for black women. The paper advertised the experiences of the previous winners to entice more contestants again, quoting Goodloe saying that “every woman seeking romance must go to Haiti to know its real meaning.” Like Harmon, Goodloe sought to engage the young black female readers of the newspaper by describing “riding horseback over mountain trails while a smiling Haitian boy trots alongside you, carrying tropical fruits and cool drinks on his head.” If Goodloe’s recommendations weren’t enough, the paper featured an editorial from another black Chicago woman, Ann Walker, who detailed “why women like to go to Haiti.” Walker noted the beauty of Haiti’s

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272 *Le Matin* newspaper clipping, August 1951, Box 243, Folder 11, Robert Abbott Papers, Vivian Harsh Collection, Carter G. Woodson Library.
273 *Haiti Sun* newspaper clipping, July 29, 1951, Box 243, Folder 11, Robert Abbott Papers, Vivian Harsh Collection, Carter G. Woodson Library.
274 Ibid.
276 Ibid.
landscape and history, and she described the hospitality of the Haitian people and the potential for black women to be sexual agents on the island. At the same time, this portrayal contributed to stereotypical images of Haiti as an exotic and overly sexual place.

Loretta Owens of Missouri, Alice Davis of Michigan, and Aloyisius Lawson of Chicago won third Ms. Defender contest in 1952, and the Midwestern women experienced a similar thrilling trip as the previous winners. The language of goodwill, tourism, art, culture, and friendship pervaded their account of the trip, and like Katherine Dunham, they noticed the difference in how Haiti’s caste system functioned: “the peasants, the lower class, second and first class residents whose line of division is distinct, but among whom the absence of the color line was worthy of note.”278 The fact that Haiti was a place for black people was arguably the most thrilling part of the experience and why it was so important for black women to go there and build lasting memories and connections with the country.

The Ms. Defender contests exemplify the important role of black women in creating connections between Haiti and Chicago. For women like Etta Moten, Janet Harmon, Venice Spraggs, and the contest winners, Haiti was a transformative experience that allowed them to be autonomous world travelers and diasporic ambassadors. It also gave them the opportunity to seek intra-racial love connections with Haitian men, which is another important aspect of diaspora building but also a problematic and stereotypical view of island voyeurism. Further, these women learned more about the reality of Haitian life and culture, and they would bring this knowledge back to Chicago and their other hometowns with them. It is fair to assume that they shared these experiences with their

278 “Defender Contest Winners Give Thrill by Thrill Account of Trip,” Chicago Defender, August 9, 1952.
family, neighbors, and friends, which would have a long-lasting impact on how blacks saw Haiti and Chicago, even after the Ms. Defender contest ceased.

**The End of the Era of Hope: Haitian President Paul Magloire Visits Chicago**

Haitian President Paul Magloire’s visit to Chicago in 1955 served as a capstone to an era of travel, diplomacy, and positive diaspora building efforts between 1934 and 1956. In early 1955, American president Dwight D. Eisenhower invited Magloire to tour the United States, and Chicago was an important stop on this tour. Magloire took office in December 1950, after serving in the military governments that had succeeded Presidents Élie Lescot (1941-1946) and Dumarsais Estimé (1946-1950). Favored by the army, the Catholic church, the business class, and much of the Haitian majority, the Magloire era was seen as “generally good” for Haiti, an era of security and peace. During his tenure, there was a rise in the arts in Haiti and a decrease in the abuses of power. Magloire also undertook various public works projects, including building roads, drainage systems, and schools, while industries like aluminum and sugar boomed. Further, he encouraged tourism during his tenure and established relationships with various black Americans, including Barnett, to encourage travel to Haiti.

Barnett and Magloire had corresponded since 1950 because Barnett used the ANP as a vehicle to promote real Haitian news, opposed to the perceivably biased and racist reports on Haiti found in the mainstream white press. In a September 1950 letter, before

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281 Ibid.
282 Manigat. 110-11.
Magloire had even taken office, Barnett offered the presidential candidate his assistance: “as your candidacy develops, I hope you will send us statements from time to time regarding your platform, your program, and your intentions.” Magloire responded to Barnett in November, telling him that his government would consider using the ANP’s services when appropriate. It seems Magloire decided quickly that Barnett could be a powerful ally since he invited Barnett to attend his inauguration in December 1950. Spraggs of the Chicago Defender also attended the lavish affair, and Barnett noted that Magloire asserted his desire for the US to send more black Americans to Haiti for diplomatic staff. Barnett thanked Magloire for the invitation, telling him his intentions for their relationship during his presidency: “It is my feeling that more and more there will be growing a feeling of unity and appreciation between Haitians and Americans—particularly colored Americans, your congeneres.” This correspondence and travel not only demonstrates Barnett’s critical role in the formation of diasporic connections between Haiti and Chicago but also shows how these relationships were built over time.

Because of the existing interest that Magloire had in Chicago the city was one of the stops on his U.S. tour in 1955. After stopping in Washington DC and New York, Magloire and his wife, Yolette, spent two days in Chicago. Provident Hospital was one of President Magloire’s first stops, and he “held an impromptu Haitian reunion with four young physicians from his country” who were working there, including Dr. Leonard.

283 Claude Barnett to Paul Magloire, 9 September 1950, Box 203, Folder 6, Claude Barnett Papers, Chicago History Museum.
285 Claude Barnett article on Magloire inauguration, 6 December 1950, Box 203, Folder 6, Claude Barnett Papers, Chicago History Museum.
286 Claude Barnett to Paul Magloire, December 1950, Box 203, Folder 6, Claude Barnett Papers, Chicago History Museum.
Additionally, Dr. Dailey, acting Haitian consul, held a special reception for Magloire and his party at the Hotel Sheraton in downtown Chicago. The event brought out the “elite of Chicago,” across racial lines. Magloire and his wife were also honored by receptions at Northwestern University and the University of Chicago and visited the offices of *Ebony* and the *Chicago Defender*, four institutions that had been active in bringing people to and from Haiti as well as promoting Haitian news and culture.

President Magloire used his visit to Chicago as an opportunity to discuss issues of race and civil rights progress in the U.S.-Caribbean world as well as the historical connections between Haiti and Chicago. At a luncheon sponsored by the Chicago Civic Commission on February 4, 1955, Magloire’s efforts to improve the conditions in Haiti were honored. He addressed an audience filled with Chicago’s business and political elite, including Mayor Martin Kennelly, Walter Rice, president of Reynold’s Mining Company, and John Evers, president of the Chicago Association of Commerce and Industry and the Commonwealth Edison Company. Magloire started his speech with noting the similarities in civil rights struggles in Haiti and the U.S.:

> He described the struggle for education and progress in Haiti and praised the recent Supreme Court decision in the United States. He expressed the hope that race discrimination in the United States would soon be a nightmare. His own country is free of racial prejudice.

Magloire also mentioned DuSable in his speech, taking a moment to recognize that he was visiting a place where one of his fellow countrymen had lived and prospered. This speech represents the struggle for access and equality that both Haitians and African Americans understood as coeval. Magloire’s speech also highlights the awareness that

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290 Claude Barnett to Bernard Dierderich, 2 April 1955, Box 204, Folder 1, Claude Barnett Papers, Chicago History Museum.
Haitians had of DuSable and his legacy in Chicago. Like Joseph Jeremie, Magloire felt it critical to honor DuSable’s impact on Chicago and felt connected to the city because of it. Both Joseph and Magloire built relationships with black Chicagoans like Edouard Scott and Claude Barnett; these connections primed the city for a Haitian diaspora to form in the later twentieth century. Overall, Magloire’s trip signaled the end of the era of hope. He was ousted from office by 1956, and the rise of Duvalierism in Haiti that would follow led to a mass exodus of Haitians to places they felt they could call home, including Chicago.

Conclusion

The era from 1934, when the U.S. occupation of Haiti ended, to 1956, just before François Duvalier’s ascension to power, marked a moment of hope in the history of the Haitian diaspora in Chicago. Black Chicagoans traveled to Haiti while Haitians trickled into Chicago. This twenty-year period involved a consistent exchange of people, art, dance, politics, and ideas which helped to shape the black cultural renaissance happening in Chicago. Haiti was going through its own cultural resurgence, with the reemergence of a black consciousness pervading the country, and black Chicaogans left their mark there as well. These parallel movements towards reclaiming blackness suggests that that black people across the African diaspora were engaging in new ways of seeing themselves in the mid-twentieth century.

Black men and women played critical roles in forming the diasporic connections between Haiti and Chicago that would encourage Haitians to call the Midwest their home in the later twentieth century. Young Haitian men wrote to the Chicago Defender in order to become part of the Bud Billiken Club and shared their culture with black youth in
Chicago and across the country. Black doctors traveled between Haiti and Chicago to hone their craft and meet other black doctors who were in their field. Black artists used the Rosenwald Fellowship to travel to Haiti which transformed them personally and artistically, and they developed friendships with Haitians that would eventually bring them to Chicago. Robert Abbott and Claude Barnett represent the important role of the Chicago black press in bridging the gap between Haiti and Chicago as well. These instances foreshadowed the predominately middle-class, educated, professional nature of the Haitian diaspora in Chicago, which was relatively small during this period but deeply connected to the African American community through familial, kinship, and professional ties.

Black women played important roles as cultural and political ambassadors to Haiti, its history, and its culture. It was the work of black women that led to the recognition of DuSable’s achievement in Chicago, and they often tied this to his Haitian heritage. The Ms. Defender contest winners are the most obvious examples, but the work of Elodie de Wendt Lane and the various members of the Feminine League of Social Action also speak to the power of Haitian women in establishing these diasporic networks. Katherine Dunham was also a key figure in this moment because she served as an intermediary between Haiti and Chicago, and her interest in Haiti extended beyond this period.

This era ended with the overthrow of Haitian president Paul Magloire, the year after his successful visit to Chicago. His predecessor, François Duvalier, was a child of the noiriste movement that had brought African Americans and Haitians together in celebration of blackness. However, Duvalier’s brand of blackness left a cloud over Haiti
that would not only keep African Americans away but also drive out many of his own people. The rise of Duvalierism in the late 1950s and 1960s led to the mass exodus of Haitians into places like New York and Chicago, where they had established connections in the decades prior.
Chapter Three

The long dictatorship of François “Papa Doc” Duvalier (1957-1971) and his son, Jean-Claude “Baby Doc” Duvalier, (1971-1986) represented a critical shift in Haitian history marked by scholars and Haitians alike as the era when things took a turn for the worse. The oral history question on the Duvaliers engendered some of the most elaborate and complicated responses. Damien B., who came to Chicago in 1963, called the Duvaliers “distasteful dictators, tyrants, and assassins.” Noelle A. shared that her father was killed by Papa Doc which made her a “person non-gratis” in Haiti. She also shared the secret to survival under the Duvalier regime was to know what you could and could not talk about. Lamar C., who lived in Haiti during the entire Duvalier reign, recalled a childhood memory of seeing Baby Doc on the way to school, protected by the Tonton Macoutes, the Duvaliers’ secret police that perpetuated much violent repression in their name. Even after fifty years, the fear was apparent in his eyes as he told the story of seeing the heavily armed police, and he described the event as an example of the way the Duvaliers’ “violated [the Haitian] psyche.”

At the same time, there were some respondents who felt that the Duvaliers were not much different than the Haitian rulers who came before them. Jasper L. noted that there had never been real leadership in Haiti, while Jacquelyn M. called the father and son another example of the history of corrupt leadership in Haiti. There were even some who felt that there were positive aspects of the Duvaliers reign, namely improved

291 Damien B., interview by Author, October 11, 2014.
293 Lamar C., interview by Author, October 9, 2014.
infrastructure and a stable government. “At the very least, there was a government at the
time.” Generation and age play a major part in the varied response to the Duvaliers:
older Haitians often viewed the period very negatively while younger Haitians typically
had a more forgiving opinion. The violent and unstable aftermath of the Duvaliers, the
fact that many of them did not live in Haiti during this time, and a focus on American
politics versus Haitian politics are likely reasons why the younger generation were more
forgiving. Many of the older Haitians interviewed cited the Duvaliers as the reason they
left Haiti.

This chapter examines the period between 1957 and 1986 when the repressive
reign of Papa Doc and Baby Doc led to the mass exodus of Haitians to various countries
and cities. Anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot describes Duvalierism as a new era of
state violence defined by its expansive use of violence against any and everyone,
including women and children (whom had previously been spared from state violence)
and a decline in educational and economic opportunity. This moment of despair in
Haiti coincided with global, national, and local shifts that led to Haitian diasporas
forming in places like New York, Boston, Miami, and Chicago. According to the census
data, the number of Haitians migrating to Chicago tremendously increased during this
time, from about 60 in 1960 to 1500 in 1980. This migration increased the total Haitian
population in Illinois to 3,000, with the majority—2,700—in Chicago. However,
evidence from Chicago newspapers and the oral histories challenge the small numbers
found in the census; a Chicago Defender article from 1971 quotes the community as

295 Pascal L, interview by Author, June 6, 2015.
167.
298 Ibid.
having over 20,000 people.\footnote{Serge Adam named Haitian consul here,} This figure could be inflated, but certainly the community was larger than 3,000.

International events, including global Cold War politics and the Vietnam War, helped push Haitians out of the homeland. Regine Jackson argues that post-World War II global shifts and air travel advancements “opened up the world” for Haitians.\footnote{Regine Jackson, ed. Geographies of the Haitian Diaspora. (New York: Routledge, 2011), 1.} These shifts included the growth of the global economy (people migrating around the globe for work), decolonization, a rise in the population of the “third world,” the increase in identity and political struggles, and continued wars and conflict worldwide.\footnote{Mary Waters and Reed Ueda, eds. The New Americans: A Guide to Immigration Since 1965. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2007). O.A. Westead, The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).} As the economic situation worsened under Duvalier in Haiti, Haitians migrated and took advantage of the global economy, especially in the United States during the Vietnam War (1954-1975). In terms of air travel, the introduction of larger commercial planes, direct flights from Port-au-Prince to more U.S. cities, and the desegregation of U.S. airports allowed Haitian migrants to more readily choose Chicago as their new home.\footnote{Jackson, 144.}

Changes to American immigration policy made it a favored spot of Haitians, among France, Canada, and other Caribbean nations. The Immigration Act of 1965 opened the U.S. to Haitians by eliminating the quotas of previous immigration laws which implicitly and explicitly predicated race as a desirability factor. Visas now became first come, first serve, and family reunification allowed for established migrants to send for their immediate family to come join them in their new home. According to scholar David Gerber, this law became “the most important piece of post-war legislation”
because it led to the “remake of the ethnic character of the U.S.” because most the 25 million migrants who came to the United States during this period were from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean.\footnote{David Gerber, American Immigration: A Very Short Introduction (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 50, 54.} This demographic shift fell in line with the Cold War politics of the United States as a beacon of democracy and the melting pot of the world, a place welcome to all. This global doctrine helps to explain why the Haitian population went from approximately 12,000 before 1965 to approximately 81,000 by 1984, according to Konczal and Stepick.\footnote{Lisa Konczal and Alex Stepick, “Haiti,” in The New Americans: A Guide to Immigration Since 1965, eds. Mary Waters and Reed Ueda (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2007): 447. Flore Zéphir, Haitian Immigrants in Black America: A Sociological and Sociolinguistic Portrait (Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 1996): 4.} This increase is also seen in Chicago’s Haitian population.

While only a small percentage of Haitians came to Chicago, it is important to understand why they chose the Windy City over the larger communities in New York and Miami. By 1970, Chicago boasted a black population of almost one million, making it one of the largest black enclaves in the nation. However, the rise of deindustrialization in this era meant fewer job opportunities in the city especially for working-class people of color. As James Grossman argues, “what had once been envisioned as a “Promised Land” for anyone willing to work hard now offered opportunity mainly to educated men and women.”\footnote{“Great Migration,” by James Grossman. Encyclopedia of Chicago History Online, http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/545.html.} Since many of the earliest Haitian migrants coming to Chicago were of the professional and educated class, Chicago offered fertile ground for them to prosper. This helps to explain the professional and middle-class base of the Haitian diaspora in Chicago.
Moreover, Chicago was not a new destination for the newest Haitian migrants, since Haitians had been traveling to Chicago for educational and diplomatic opportunities since the 1930s. This travel was based on the ever-present idea of Haiti in the city, the ways African descended people in Chicago (re)constructed a founding myth about Jean Baptiste Point DuSable. Yet, the rise of Duvalierism had a negative impact on the idea of Haiti. According to Millery Polyné:

> with reports of Duvalier’s repression swirling in the mainstream US press between 1958-1971, it eventually proved difficult for many US African Americans to continue to ignore a destructive reading of Haitian affairs, particularly in the context of their own march toward civil rights and the radical anticolonialist politics emerging from newly independent African nations.\(^{306}\)

Haiti no longer served as a source of inspiration of black power, and the idea of Haiti shifted to one of violence, poverty, and disease. The country became associated with the AIDS epidemic, the source of a major refugee crisis, and a haven for nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). This shift coincided with the Chicago Freedom Movement (CFM), when African Americans in the city refocused their attention on local needs and issues instead of looking for international inspiration from Haiti as they had in the past. The CFM was the local manifestation of national struggles by black and brown people for full access to citizenship rights and led to “more militant demands and programs rooted in the reality of the existing circumstances.”\(^{307}\) These demands included desegregation of Chicago public schools and access to housing. The legacy of DuSable remained a key civil rights issue in Chicago during the CFM, and African American women leadership commanded efforts in promoting his legacy just as they had in the

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past. Their work around the DuSable legacy highlights continuity in the idea of Haiti in this period.

Therefore, this chapter examines the period from 1957 to 1985 because it was the moment when Chicago’s Haitian diasporic community began to form. The global, national, and local shifts of this period culminated in a small but visible community growing in Chicago which had been fertile soil for this diaspora due to the links dating back the post-occupation period. This smaller and decentralized diaspora formed through both formal and informal networks and exemplifies what scholars like Chantalle Verna call less-traditional diasporas. Less traditional than the Haitian diasporas in New York and Miami in scope, size, and history, the Chicago diaspora reveals the important history of the African diaspora in the Midwest and how Haitians in particular influenced the culture, politics, and landscape in the Windy City during the second half of the twentieth century.

Duvalierism and A New Era of Haiti-Chicago Connections

In order to understand how and why a more visible diaspora formed in Chicago in the second half of the twentieth century, it is important to examine the dictatorship of François “Papa Doc” Duvalier and Jean Claude “Baby Doc” Duvalier. The terror from the repression, violence, disappearances, and murders left an indelible imprint on Haitian society. Many Haitians were exiled from the country for speaking out against the Duvaliers while others left voluntarily. The impact of Duvalierism also reached beyond Haiti and redefined the idea of Haiti worldwide and in Chicago. The Duvalier reign led black Chicagoans to turn away from Haiti as an inspiration for black power and black

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pride. Moreover, the rise of Duvaliersim led to mixed reactions from black Chicagoans of their new Haitian neighbors.

François Duvalier was born in Port-au-Prince in 1907 and educated at the prestigious *Lycée Pétion* school in the city. He graduated from the University of Haiti in 1934, where he was mainly taught by American doctors, who started teaching there during the U.S. occupation of Haiti. Growing up during the occupation unequivocally shaped Duvalier as a man and as a leader. Scholar Leon Pamphile argues that “Duvalier was the product of Haiti’s resistance to the racist policies of the American occupation, which catered to the upper-class mulatto interests over the dark-skinned masses.”

During the *noirisme* movement of the mid-twentieth century, which was born out of occupation resistance, Duvalier headed the *Les Griots* newspaper which highlighted the African heritage of Haitians and served as a voice for labor unions and the urban masses. This signaled a shift in power towards the new black middle class in Haiti, whose prominence would grow under Papa Doc.

After the overthrow and exile of President Paul Magloire in December 1956, Duvalier defeated several other candidates to become the next president of Haiti. He took office in October 1957 despite rumors of election fraud and voter intimidation.

Although he campaigned under a populist and black nationalist banner, Papa Doc quickly began the process of consolidating complete power over the country. Several coup attempts early on in his presidency made Duvalier very paranoid, and he quickly

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retaliated against real and perceived threats. Within a few years in office, he had effectively shut down the press, schools, Catholic Church: all institutions seen as potential threats to his power. Moreover, he created the National Security Volunteers (better known as the Tontons Macoutes), a militia force who had helped him win the election and worked to terrorize, torture, murder, and exile Haitians who opposed him once he became president.\(^\text{312}\) In many ways, Papa Doc typified the cycle of Haitian politics, “the product of certain well established patterns and conflicts within Haiti’s history.”\(^\text{313}\) Yet, Papa Doc took Haiti’s historical pattern of using violence to maintain order and suppress political opposition to a new level.\(^\text{314}\) Anywhere from 30,000 to 60,000 Haitians were killed by the state during his reign, and no one was spared from the brutal and ruthless violence.\(^\text{315}\) According to journalist Bernard Dierderich (who was exiled during the Duvalier years), Duvalier implemented a strict curfew, censorship and imprisonment for those who spoke against him and his government, and public executions for those involved in overthrow plots.\(^\text{316}\)

Further, Papa Doc garnered mass wealth through taxation and foreign contributions especially from the United States, which facilitated an economic crisis and decreased the overall standard of living especially for the rural masses.\(^\text{317}\) Scholars approximate that he secured $12.5 million annually during his reign in exchange for his

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\(^{312}\) See Dierderich, DuBois, Pamphile and Polyné for details on human rights violations under François Duvalier.


\(^{314}\) Dubois, 313.

\(^{315}\) DuBois, 326, Ferguson, 57.


pledge against communism during the Cold War. Historian Laurent Dubois also argues that some in the U.S. applauded the stability Duvalier’s repressive regime had finally established in Haiti, something they had failed to achieve during the occupation. In a 1962 Tribune article, Peter Clayton, the Vice President of Chicago-based Meissner Engineers, lauded Papa Doc for bringing “reason and sanity” to Haiti. President John F. Kennedy represented the only official United States opposition to Papa Doc and planned to overthrow the dictator with assistance from the Dominican Republic. However, Kennedy was assassinated before his plan could ever gain traction, and Duvalier consolidated complete power over Haiti, which culminated in his April 1964 decree that made him president for life.

Papa Doc’s health started to deteriorate in 1969, and to ensure that Duvalierism would continue, he altered the 1964 Haitian constitution to pave the way for his son to replace him. At only nineteen years old, Baby Doc became the president of Haiti in April 1971. Baby Doc was the youngest of his siblings, but as the only son, he was the obvious choice to take over his father’s patriarchal reign. Historian Elizabeth Abbott argues that Baby Doc’s sister, Marie Denise, was poised to be Papa Doc’s successor, but the elder Duvalier went with his son after his advisors warned that the people of Haiti would not accept a female president. The United States and Dominican Republic (D.R.) aided in the successful passage of power from father to son, and accordingly, “there was no outward sign of opposition to Jean Claude after the Haiti radio announcement of

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318 Heinl, 587; Polyné, 197.
Duvalier’s death and his son’s takeover."\textsuperscript{322} In exchange for the U.S. and D.R.’s support, Baby Doc pledged to continue in the fight against communism, highlighting the impact of the Cold War on Haitian politics.\textsuperscript{323}

Scholars and media alike refer to Baby Doc as a “playboy” who was more interested in “fast cars, motorcycles, and women” than political power, so by the time he became president, Baby Doc ensured the people that he would simply “continue the programs of my father” rather than push a new political agenda.\textsuperscript{324} That is indeed what Baby Doc did, symbolized by the inclusion of many of his father’s advisors into his cabinet. Baby Doc also continued to use the \textit{Tonton Macoutes} to suppress all political opposition and dissent. He differed from his father in that he seemed more interested in wealth, than power, and he acquired increasing amounts of foreign investment and aid money. Over the course of his reign, he allegedly stole millions of dollars from the national treasury, which drove Haiti into devastating poverty. The combination of violent political repression and an unstable economy led to what scholar Beverly Bell calls the “development of underdevelopment” in Haiti under Baby Doc.\textsuperscript{325}

These factors led to the exodus of Haitians to various locales, including France, Canada, the Caribbean, and the United States. According to Dubois, approximately one million people (15% of the population) fled during the Duvaliers’ reign.\textsuperscript{326} The first to leave had the financial means to do so, and some of these early migrants chose Chicago among other U.S. metropoles due to the economic opportunity, freedom, and security it

\textsuperscript{322} “Haiti’s Dictator Duvalier Dies; Son, 20, Rules,” \textit{Chicago Tribune}, April 23, 1971. Ferguson, 57.
\textsuperscript{323} Dubois, 350.
\textsuperscript{324} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{325} Bell, 11.
\textsuperscript{326} Dubois, 354.
offered. Roland Weiner is one example of a Haitian who escaped to Chicago in 1959 after having issues with Papa Doc, and his profession as an engineer highlights how the middle-class Chicago diaspora took shape

Many of the oral history respondents also migrated during the Duvalier era, and they chose Chicago because they had family living there since the 1940s and 1950s, which not only challenges the miniscule number of Haitians in Chicago portrayed by the census data but also shows the importance of family reunification and kinship networks in bringing Haitians to Chicago. Lionel B. credited family reunification as the reason he came to Chicago as a teenager; his mom and stepfather were already in Chicago along with other family. Some of the respondents went to the more familiar diaspora in New York first and then came to Chicago where they found more educational and professional job opportunities. Fabienne D., a Haitian-American who came to Chicago as a child, said that her family came to Chicago because they had relatives already living in the Hyde Park area and because they felt like Chicago would be easier than New York to settle and prosper in.

Upon their arrival in Chicago, the Haitian migrants utilized their new freedom in the public sphere to discuss what was happening in the homeland, and their varied response shows the heterogeneity of Chicago’s diaspora, despite its small size. A January 1962 expose on Papa Doc for the Chicago Tribune, renowned Latin America journalist Jules Dubois argued that Haiti was on the decline due to the dictator’s policies. When Dubois talked to Antoine Hérard, the director general of the Haitian tourist office in

327 Jackson, 2; Stepick 4.
328 Polyné, 188, 196.
330 Fabienne D., interview by Author, June 30, 2016
Chicago, Hérard contradicted Dubois’ claims. “Duvalier is not a dictator. He is a man who is working for the true people and has against him all those who used to exploit the people since independence.” Hérard also pointed out the many corrupt American institutions he had observed, including the press and the FBI: “You have a dictatorship of the labor unions because I am in Chicago and I know.” This statement shows how some Haitians may have viewed the labor politics of Chicago in relation to Haitian politics and highlights the process of transferring notions from the homeland to the hostland within the diaspora. Moreover, Hérard had a stake in defending Duvalier due to his position as the director of the Haiti tourism office. Many Haitians did support Duvalier, as seen in some of the oral history responses I received. Karl D. shared that he worked with Papa Doc and saw him as a strong leader but brutal man. Adalyn L. recalled her mom crying when she learned of Baby Doc’s death in 2014, which suggests fond memories of the former president. Likewise, some respondents pointed to the security of the Duvalier period especially considering Haiti’s current unsafe conditions. “Haiti may have needed someone like that.”

Similarly, two Haitian men new to Chicago gave their opinion on the state of Haiti to the Chicago Defender in October 1962 and only had the best things to say about Papa Doc’s regime and the state of the country. Ulrich Bien-Aimé attended Roosevelt University as a graduate student, while Antonio Desrosiers worked for a local jewelry firm. Bien-Aimé, who served as the spokesmen for both men, contended that Haitians were leaving Haiti because they wanted to and not because of the turmoil in the

332 Ibid.
333 Karl D., interview by Author, August 6, 2016.
homeland. “Those who have left on their own did so because they want to broaden their education and experiences, just as educated people in every country will do.”336

Specifically, he said the Chicago Haitian migrants sought “more knowledge in the technical fields, political science, business, and other areas of study.”337 Bien-Aimé concluded the interview by blaming the American government and mainstream media for perpetrating lies about his country: “I don’t think that American newspapers have been very accurate in their stories about Haiti. I also believe that United States diplomats should stop so much partying and go out and talk to the masses, so they can get a more accurate impression of the people’s situation.”338

These examples highlight critical aspects of the burgeoning Haitian diaspora in Chicago and the impact of Duvalierism on the diasporic Midwest. First, this interview shows that there was political discourse about the homeland while living in the hostland and explains how the diaspora became a key part of the expanded Haitian political landscape.339 Even after leaving the island, Haitians still had the country on their mind and engaged in dialogue with each other about current events there. Moreover, it is important to note how both men only praised Papa Doc, even as the journalists presented them with evidence of his abuses. This shows that some Haitians were in fact, pro-Duvalier, and that not all Haitians left during this era in response to the repression under Duvaliersism. Their support could also suggest that both Hérard and Bien-Aimé were aware of the very real consequences for family left behind in the homeland if Haitians in the diaspora expressed anti-Duvalier sentiment, so they may have publicly promoted

338 Ibid.
339 See Laguerre, Polyné, Trouillot on the expanding role of the Haitian diaspora in island politics.
Duvalier for safety reasons. Hérard and Bien-Aimé’s critiques of U.S. institutions highlight the post-occupation resentment that Haitians felt and transferred to the diaspora. It seemed important for both men to challenge the popular narrative of Haiti in the American press, and lauding Papa Doc was one way of doing that. Finally, educational and job opportunities brought these men to the city, like many of the Chicago migrants, shown by the fact that all three had jobs and/or were attending school in Chicago.

Chicago press outlets had to rely on Haitian migrants in Chicago for news on Haiti because the relationship between the African American press and Haitian press deteriorated under Duvalier. This represented a shift in relations between the two spaces and demonstrates a major reason why the idea of Haiti changed in Chicago during the Duvalier reign. Claude Barnett, the head of the Associated Negro Press (ANP) who had established a long relationship with Haitian officials since the 1940s, was shut out of Haitian affairs during this period. Barnett’s archive reveals that despite his best efforts, he could not establish a solid relationship with Duvalier or his government. Even before Duvalier took office, information from the country became sparse. In a May 1956 letter to Denys Bellande, the Director of Information in Haiti, Barnett pledged his continued interest in Haiti and its future. “Please be sure to keep us informed of any happenings in Haiti. You know we here feel vitally interested in the welfare of the country. We cannot afford to have anything happen to hurt her good name nor to create and impression of instability.”

Barnett used the language of brotherhood in this quote that defined the previous decades of Haiti-Chicago relations and hoped that things would continue in this fashion. Despite a response from Maurice Casseus, the official interpreter and translator

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340 Claude Barnett to Denys Bellande, 25 May 1956, Box 204, Folder 2, Claude Barnett Papers, Chicago History Museum.
at the Haitian Presidential Palace in September 1957 assuring Barnett that “notes and documents would be forwarded to [the ANP] each week,” it seems the communication remained strained between the Haitian press and black Chicago press.\footnote{Maurice Casseus to Claude Barnett, 13 September 1957, Box 204, Folder 2, Claude Barnett Papers, Chicago History Museum.}

In December, Barnett wrote to Bellande again, noting that there had been silence on Haitian affairs. “People here are eager to know what is transpiring in Haiti. There has been nothing from your office…. Please get some definite truth to us by wire or immediate mail.”\footnote{Claude Barnett to Denys Bellande, 13 December 1956, Box 204, Folder 2, Claude Barnett Papers, Chicago History Museum.} The Chicago mainstream press reported the turbulent and violent 1957 election cycle, and so Barnett seemed to be looking for a Haitian news source to refute these claims. For instance, a June 1957 article in the \textit{Chicago Tribune} detailed how the Haitian army had to control the protestors after they ousted provisional president Daniel Fignolé, announcing a “state of siege, a form of martial law for all Haiti to cope with the menaces of certain politicians constituting an imminent peril for the internal security of the state.”\footnote{“Army Tosses Fignolé Out and Runs Haiti,” \textit{Chicago Daily Tribune}, June 15, 1957.}

Barnett also reached out to Duvalier personally to establish a relationship with the Haitian president as he had done with previous presidents Dumarsais Estimé and Paul Magloire. In November 1957, he sent two letters to Duvalier, first praising him for continuing his promise to continue the policies of Estimé to empower the black majority of Haiti and then to request that Duvalier continue to foster a relationship between Haitians and African Americans. Barnett argued that the relationship between the two groups needed more work because “the mass [of African Americans] has known too little
about the Pearl of the Antilles.” He blamed this disconnect on the language barrier but noted that those who had been able to visit Haiti were “enthusiastic” about the country and its people. Barnett included a list of prominent blacks from Chicago to Duvalier in order to encourage the new president to invite more African Americans to his country. This letter not only highlights Barnett’s concerted effort to “make the people of color in America and Haiti come closer together,” it also shows that he believed these connections would be built in a sort of trickle-down effect. Prominent blacks would travel to Haiti first, since they had the means, and then they would share their experience with the masses. Yet this trickle-down method proved ineffective; elite black Chicagoans had been traveling to Haiti since the 1930s, but there was still a disconnect with the masses in the city about Haitian culture. In many ways, Barnett’s letter points to how class barriers in Chicago and Haiti replicated in endeavors to create diaspora.

These letters to Duvalier and his officials did not seem to help at first, but Barnett still tried to develop these relationships. A November 1958 letter from Lucien Daumec, the secretary to Duvalier, demonstrates Barnett’s continued effort to create diasporic connections between Haiti and Chicago. Daumec had recently visited Chicago and based on this, he wanted to work with Barnett to create a “closer bond of friendship between Haiti and Chicago.” Daumec’s suggestions to form such bonds included opening a local Haitian office for the ANP and honoring Barnett with a medal of honor and merit for his service in “tightening the historical bonds of friendship between Haiti and

344 Claude Barnett to François Duvalier, 30 November 1957, Box 204, Folder 2, Claude Barnett Papers, Chicago History Museum.
345 Ibid.
Chicago.” The use of such language, especially the note about the “historical bonds” demonstrates that Haitians had an idea of Chicago in their mind for some time and suggests their awareness of DuSable as the start of this bond between the two spaces.

In January 1965, Barnett was awarded the prestigious honor of becoming an Officer of the National Grand Order of Honor and Merit, and this was the highest honor a non-Haitian citizen had ever received from the government. The ceremony was “considered as a new manifestation of Haitian-American friendship and a new affirmation of friendship which ties the Haitian people to their brothers of color in the United States,” but this did not occur. Duvalier did not attend Barnett’s ceremony and despite several attempts, Barnett was not able to meet Duvalier during this visit. “It is a matter of deep concern to me that I have not had the opportunity to know you and not to receive credible information about the present-day Haiti.” This marked Barnett’s seventh and final trip to Haiti, and while he remained optimistic that Haitians and African Americans, especially in Chicago, would continue to build diasporic connections with each other, the Duvalier years stalled many of the connections that had been made during the mid-twentieth century.

Barnett’s failed relationship with Duvalier symbolizes the change in Haiti-Chicago connections that occurred under Papa Doc’s reign and continued under Baby Doc. Unlike his predecessors, Papa Doc did not feel it was necessary to work with African Americans to promote a positive image of Haiti. He silenced the Haitian press and African American press at the same time, and his repressive regime pushed Haitians

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347 Ibid.
348 Claude Barnett to François Duvalier, 15 January 1965, Box 204, Folder 4, Claude Barnett Papers, Chicago History Museum.
349 Claude Barnett to François Duvalier, 9 May 1964, Box 204, Folder 4, Claude Barnett Papers, Chicago History Museum.
out of the country at a rapid pace. Ironically, as the Haitian population in Chicago grew due to the economic and political turmoil in their home country, the diplomatic and diasporic ties between Haitians and African Americans waned. This disconnection shaped how African Americans and Haitians related to each other in they had to find new ways to connect with one another.

**The Pioneer Generation: Haitian Migrants Build the Chicago Diaspora**

During the Duvalier era, census records approximate that 3,000 Haitians lived in Chicago out of the approximately 300,000 Haitians who resided in the United States, while unofficial data reports a population of about 20,000 Haitians in Chicago during this period. Many of the oral history respondents for this study came to Chicago in the 1960s and 1970s, and family reunification and educational opportunities were the two biggest pull factors that brought them to Chicago combined with the push factor of the Duvalierism. Despite the smaller size of this diaspora, Haitians in Chicago represent an important historical and cultural portion of black Chicago and highlight why and how black immigrants acclimate to their hostland. In particular, Chicago Haitians usually lived in neighborhoods where African Americans resided, especially on the south side of the city. The newest migrants remained engaged in homeland politics while attempting build hostland connections with African Americans and their fellow Haitian migrants. Competition for jobs and space sometimes led to tension between Haitians and African Americans because of the deindustrialization and overcrowding in the city. Haitians had to develop new racial and cultural understandings in an American context which often led

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to misunderstandings and disconnections. The earliest Haitian migrants, whom I call the pioneers generation, set the tone for how Haitians would acculturate in Chicago over time. The Haitian consul played a critical role in the development of this diaspora. Black women of both Haitian and American descent also took the lead in creating the diaspora by building connections between the homeland and the hostland and bridging the gaps between the two cultures.

Many of these migrants became actively involved in their new community, including H. Ernest Lafontant, a Haitian-born attorney who graduated from John Marshall Law School in Chicago. Lafontant served as the Haitian consulate in Chicago during the 1960s, his endeavors in this role laid the groundwork for the consul to be a pillar for the Chicago Haitian diaspora for years to come. Through his public platform, Lafontant helped to shape the idea of Haiti for Chicagoans. He worked with black Chicagoans to do this, including Barnett. From correspondence between Lafontant and Barnett, it is clear that Lafontant was recognized as an important Haitian representative in Chicago and someone who could help to build connections between the two spaces.

In August 1960, Lafontant spoke at the Yendor Cultural and Ethical Society of Chicago’s monthly book club meeting. The “noted Haitian dignitary” addressed the audience of black clubwomen with a speech entitled, “Haiti, Its Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow.”351 The Yendor Club, much like the National DuSable Memorial Society (NDMS), helped to bridge the gap between the idea of Haiti and the reality of Haiti in Chicago, by having Lafontant speak on the history and current climate of the country. Their request to have Lafontant as their guest also suggests that black Chicagoans were aware of their newest neighbors and sought to understand their cultural perspective.

Further, this exemplifies the importance of black women in building Haitian diasporic connections in Chicago.

Lafontant was honored for his important role in Chicago’s multiethnic society at the 8th Annual Consular Ball in October 1961. The event served as an opportunity to recognize Lafontant and other dignitaries for their “many years of work and service have increased and strengthened international understanding and mutual commercial benefits between their countries and the middle west.” Lafontant’s guest for the Consular Ball was Mrs. Jewel Stradford Rogers, who would soon become Mrs. Jewel Stradford Lafontant. The daughter of Supreme Court attorney and National Bar Association co-founder C. Francis Stradford, Mrs. Lafontant was the first black woman to graduate from University of Chicago Law School in 1946. Mrs. Lafontant also helped found the Chicago chapter of Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and worked for the Chicago chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). She joined her husband, Ernest Lafontant, in political and philanthropic initiatives for Haiti. The two married in 1962, and when Hurricane Flora hit Haiti in October 1963, the Lafontants took charge in Chicago to send aid to the ailing country.

Hurricane Flora led to a great amount of destruction in Haiti, and it exemplifies how natural disasters could bring the diaspora together to help Haiti in its time of need. According to the New York Times, “the storm battered Haiti for nine hours with 140 mile winds” and left the country “a sodden trash heap with towns ravaged.” In all,

353 Ibid.
354 Ibid.
355 Ibid.
approximately five thousand Haitians died, and $180 million worth of property was damaged. In response to the call for American assistance by Dr. Gérard Philippeau, the Haitian Minister of Health, the Lafontants helped form the Emergency Aid for the People of Haiti (EAPH) committee. The organization’s main goal was to gather clothing, medical supplies, food, and household supplies in Chicago and send them to Haiti. Elodie de Wendt Lane joined the Lafontants in the EAPH which also included members of the Feminine League of Social Action (FLSA). Thus, the Lafontants helped to connect Haiti and Chicago, not only through their marriage, but also through their philanthropic work within both communities. Their work in EAPH also helped to bring together the growing Haitian diaspora in Chicago, and Mrs. Lafontant and Mrs. Lane again highlight the important role of black women in forming diaspora.

The FLSA also continued its effort towards connecting Haiti and Chicago during the period from the 1950s to the 1980s. After having various founding members speak in Chicago during the post-occupation period, the FLSA established a Chicago chapter in 1961. The main goal of the group was to fundraise for the Alice Garoute Center in Haiti, a place for young Haitian girls to learn home economics and proper hygiene. At the Chicago FLSA’s first anniversary celebration held at the Palmer House in Chicago, Lane and other Haitian American women came together to celebrate the progress women had made in the hostland and homeland towards full legal and societal recognition. Moreover, the organization included other “American friends,” which signaled a coalition across nationality and ethnicity. People like Lafontant and Elodie

358 Ibid.
de Wendt Lane were part of a growing diaspora of young and affluent Haitians who interacted with their elite African American peers in Chicago.

Serge Adam is another example of an elite Haitian making strides in his new community. Adam succeeded Lafontant as the Haitian consul in Chicago in 1971, and he continued using the position to engage the larger black community in Chicago.\(^\text{359}\) As the former Director of Tourism in Haiti and a graduate of both Fisk University and the University of Chicago, Adam represented the most elite part of Chicago’s professional and accomplished diaspora. In his first speech as consul, Adam evoked the DuSable legacy in Chicago and noted that the newest Haitians in Chicago had also made their mark in the city. “The Haitians here in the Midwest…have established a number of Haitian societies in the United States throughout the years,” and “also made financial contributions to the people in the mother country.”\(^\text{360}\) The latter point highlighted the growing importance of remittances from the diaspora to the homeland and suggests that the middle-class Chicago diaspora provided financial support in a unique way.\(^\text{361}\)

Adam also took the opportunity to reclaim the fleeting positive idea of Haiti in the mind of Chicagoans, by attesting to the strides Baby Doc made in improving the conditions in Haiti. These improvements included new roads, hotels, and a new dam. Considering that Adam had worked under Papa Doc while in Haiti and that he held the Haitian consul position (a representative for the Haitian government), his focus on Duvalier’s infrastructure improvements makes sense and echoes the argument that many supporters used and would continue to use over the course of the twentieth century to challenge the narrative of despair and peril under Duvalier.

\(^{360}\) Ibid.
\(^{361}\) Ibid.
Adam’s efforts to reverse the increasingly damaged image of Haiti in Chicago continued in 1972, when he spoke against the Haitian refugee crisis. While twelve of the refugees claimed political persecution as their reason for living Haiti, Adam called their migration economically motivated. “They are simply people who wanted to come to the U.S. and couldn’t obtain visas. So now they are trying to convince American immigration authorities that they’re exiles of oppression.”\(^\text{362}\) However, one of the refugees vehemently denied Adam’s assertion of progress in the homeland: “With a fat belly, the young one [Baby Doc] cannot understand hunger.”\(^\text{363}\) These discrepancies highlight important disconnections within the Haitian diaspora in the U.S. based on a combination of politics, class, and generation. These discrepancies also point to why Haitians in Chicago did not organize against the Duvaliers.

The diaspora in Chicago continued to grow and become more visible during the 1970s, and Haitians made a difference outside governmental positions. Maurice Chassagne, a music teacher in Chicago, created such an important impact on his hostland community that he received a great deal of recognition when he died in a car accident June 1972. Indeed, Chassagne’s loss was felt not only by the growing “Haitian colony” in Chicago, but also by his numerous American students.\(^\text{364}\) Chassagne was born in Jeremie, Haiti and migrated to the US in 1946. He received his Masters from Roosevelt University in Chicago and went on to teach music at various Chicago schools, including the Potential School for Exceptional Children, Francis Parker School and Lena Day School. Although his migration predated the Duvalier years, Chassagne’s educational achievement and work as a teacher speaks to the factors that make the Chicago diaspora


\(^{363}\) Ibid.

unique. Chassagne also had family in both New York and Canada at his death, highlighting the connections of the Chicago diaspora to the other more established locales for Haitians. In these ways, Chassagne embodies various important intricacies of the Chicago diaspora and how it formed.

Haitians in Chicago adapted increasingly to their new environment while retaining close ties to Haiti and the homeland culture. In the January 1975 celebration, the diaspora celebrated Haiti’s Independence Day at St. Clotilde Church, a Catholic Church on the south side. The importance of this holiday in Haiti translated to the hostland in Chicago, and Haitians from all across the city came together to celebrate. The event included popular Haitian cuisine (like rice and beans), dancing (Gina Dupervil, a resident, danced to “Haiti Chérie”), and the singing of the Haitian national anthem.365 This celebration also included a reading of poetry from Langston Hughes and Fred Johnson, a contemporary Chicago poet. This cultural event emphasizes the dual allegiance of Haitians in the diaspora. Moreover, the reading of Langston Hughes’s works highlights the important diasporic connections established during the post-occupation period, when Hughes was a frequent visitor of Haiti and proponent of Haitian culture through editorials in the Chicago Defender. Chicago’s celebration of Haitian Independence Day in 1975 signaled a shift in the diaspora towards becoming more established in their Chicago home.

**Learning What It Means to be Black in America: Chicago Haitians Encounter Discrimination in the Diaspora**

The pioneers of the Haitian diaspora in Chicago dealt with the complications of understanding what it meant to be black in an American context. Despite being largely

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educated, professional, and middle-class, Haitians in Chicago learned that their race played a factor in how they would matriculate in their new environment. Their migration coincided with the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, a time of tumultuous shifts in race relations in the United States. Specifically, as African Americans were staking claim to the promises made in the wake of the Civil War one hundred years prior, black immigrants, including Haitians, were helping redefine what it meant to be black in America. The liberalization of the immigration policies in the 1960s opened the door for black and brown people from the Caribbean, Latin America, and Africa to benefit and prosper from the new civil rights policies. However, these changes were not absolute, and the newest migrants faced their share of discrimination in the diaspora.

In February 1962, Roger Jean, a Haitian high school principal and temporary migrant in Arlington Heights (a suburb thirty miles northwest of Chicago), was denied a haircut at several locations. According to the *Afro-American* newspaper, Jean was visiting Arlington Heights to observe teaching methods at the local high school. In need of a haircut, Jean asked the school principal, Nelson Lowry, to find a barber for him in the all-white suburb since he was very “mindful of American segregation.” However, Lowry could not get any of the three local barbers to give Jean a haircut, and the closest yes that Lowry received was from one of the barbers who offered to help Jean after closing hours. Another responded that he was not trained to cut “all types of hair,” leaving Jean to get a haircut from the math teacher at the school. This incident ignited an uproar locally and nationally. Wayne Breannan, the president of the Chamber of Commerce, personally wrote a letter of apology to Jean, and William White, the director

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367 Ibid.
of the Illinois Department of Registration and Education, noted that barbers had to be versed in cutting a variety of hair textures before they could receive a state license, effectively denying the second barber’s excuse. In response, two of the barbers retracted their original denials and offered to cut Jean’s hair. 368

This incident exemplifies the intricacies of the diasporic experience for Haitians in Chicago during this era. On the one hand, Roger Jean was accepted with open arms into the Arlington Heights community: his neighbors and students were quite fond of the educator, who was described as “quiet and scholarly.” Like many of the Haitian migrants to Chicago, he was desirable in that he was educated and professional. Jean was not interested in being a civil rights activist when he started looking for a place to get a haircut, and he is quoted as saying that “he was not trying to bring about tonsorial integration in the suburb.” He simply wanted a haircut. While most of the community seemed to accept him, some saw him simply as a black man, someone to fear and marginalize. Jean’s quest for a haircut put him at the center of a scandal which made national news and called into question how much things were actually changing in the Civil Rights era. This incident also served as learning opportunity for Jean and other Haitian immigrants on how discrimination worked on a micro level in America.

Similarly, two Haitian nurses, Evelyne Armand and Lisa Roumain, found themselves in the middle of a racial scandal. In 1971, the two women filed a suit with the Illinois Supreme Court against William Robinson of the Illinois Department of Registration and Education for denying them the opportunity to obtain a license to practice in Chicago. The suit claimed that the discrimination was based on language and

368 Ibid.
369 Ibid.
370 Ibid.
immigration status, although both women were naturalized U.S. citizens. Furthermore, Robinson ignored letters written to substantiate the women’s credentials. Even though the women’s Chicago supervisors testified to their competence, Robinson continuously denied their claim: “The petition is denied on the basis that all evidence presented tends to indicate that you are not prepared to function as a registered nurse.”

Like Roger Jean, Armand and Roumain were educated Haitians who chose Chicago for its educational and career opportunities. Armand worked at both Woodlawn and Martha Washington hospitals, and Roumain worked at Williams Clinic, all located in the Chicagoland area. Unlike Jean who seemed timid and somewhat incredulous about the discrimination he faced, these Haitian women did not shirk away once met with their own racial scandal; they actively took a stand for themselves and confronted the discrimination head on. Despite repeated denials from Robinson and the Illinois Department of Registration and Education, the women challenged the second-class treatment they received through legal means. Their status as black foreign women did not deter them from confronting a white male authority figure, and they took their case to the highest court in the state. This action represents how Haitian women in Chicago pushed for gender and race equality in the city, much like the FLSA, and an instance that showed Haitians in Chicago that being black in America involved struggling against an oppressive system.

Chicago’s Haitian consul Serge Adam also faced discrimination. In 1974, Michigan police stopped Adam for allegedly driving recklessly and without a license. Trooper James J. Bos provided details of the incident to the Chicago Tribune, claiming that Adam was doing 90 miles an hour in a 55-mph zone, passing on the right and left of

other vehicles, and once stopped by police, Adam responded aggressively. When asked for his driver’s license, Adam purportedly responded that he did not have one, and “if I did have one, I wouldn’t show it to you.”

Adam continued his defiance, also telling Bos, “I do not have to follow the laws of your country and I have no intention of following the laws. If you hold me up, I’ll have your badge.” With that, Adam threw the tickets Bos issued him on the ground and drove away.

When asked about these salacious allegations, Adam completely denied the incident as Bos relayed it. “I WAS NOT going that speed…I was stopped….I explained who I was, the consul general, and I told them that I did not have a driver’s license…I was handed a ticket, and I said, ‘Since you have my address, why don’t you mail it to me,’ but they threw it in my car. I handed it back, they threw it in again, and I handed it back.”

The conflicting details of this event again highlight the complexities of learning about race in America for Chicago Haitians. It is questionable whether the incident occurred exactly how Officer Bos or Adam relayed it. It does seem that Adam did not completely comply with Bos’ directives, but it is likely that Adam was racially profiled by Bos and learned that driving while black was a crime in America in itself.

This interaction also seems to be an instance of cultures clashing; Bos expected Adam to be compliant and have complete deference while Adam expected a level of respect and leniency from the police officer because he, too, was a public official. Bos, likely a white man from the Midwest, may not have been familiar or comfortable with a black man exercising his power and asserting his authority, something black men in Haiti do often, especially those in public office. This may be why he described Adam as being

373 Ibid.
374 Ibid.
rude and combative; that he had the audacity to challenge a police officer was a violation in itself. Thus, this incident served as a moment of racial learning for both men, but especially for Adam who learned what it means to be black in America and that political status did not save one from racial discrimination. It is important to also note that this incident could have been worse and ended in Adam’s arrest or death. Police brutality remained a critical issue for black activists nationally and locally, and it inspired the formation of Black Power groups in Chicago during the 1960s and 1970s, including the Illinois chapter of the Black Panther Party.⁴⁷⁵

Haitians continued to fight against discriminatory treatment through the 1980s, using legal means instead of collective organizing to assert their citizenship rights. In the fall of 1985, Joseph Pompilus, a lab technician, filed a lawsuit against Chicago Public Schools (CPS) on behalf of his fifteen-year-old niece, Junia Pierre. Pierre moved in with her uncle in 1983 on a student visa from Haiti and was charged nonresident student rates, deemed ineligible to take advantage of a free public education. Pierre also faced deportation if she did not enroll in school. According to Pompilus’ suit, this incident violated the Illinois Constitution that mandates a free education for all. This case represents key elements of the Haitian diaspora in Chicago: the importance of education and family networks to the formation of the diaspora, how migrants had to learn what it meant to be black in America, and their resistance to this status. Pierre moved to Chicago to take advantage of the educational opportunities that the city had to offer, and she utilized the family reunification policy of the 1965 Immigration Act to come to the city. Pompilus’ work as a lab technician supports the claim of Chicago’s diaspora being

mainly middle-class. Most important, in the face of adversity, Pierre and Pompilus advocated for their rights as new Americans and put pressure on the American legal system to live up to its doctrine of equality. This instance provided an opportunity not only for Pompilus and his niece not only to learn what it meant to be black in America but also to help redefine it.

During the late twentieth century, Haitians migrating to Chicago had to learn what it meant to be black in America. They often learned these lessons within the educational institutions, which highlights the important role education played in not only bringing Haitians to the city but also in helping them get acclimated with their new home. One oral history respondent, Mae Y., described being called a nigger for the first time in school and how a teacher had to explain to her the meaning of the term. This instance along with the other examples discussed in this section, reveal the various ways Haitian migrants responded and resisted their second-class treatment. Whether it was Roger Jean consulting an ally on a safe place to get a haircut, Consul Serge Adam standing up to a police officer who he felt was wrong, or Evelyne Armand, Lisa Roumain, Joseph Pompilus, and Junia Pierre taking legal action against the discrimination they faced, Haitians in the Chicago diaspora used their voice to assert their rights just as their ancestors had been doing since the late eighteenth century. While these examples do not necessarily suggest that all Haitians resisted racial discrimination, they do highlight how black immigrants adjusted to and influenced their new racial landscape.

**Black Women, The DuSable Campaign and Cultural Activism in Chicago**

Haitians moved to Chicago during the era of civil rights and black power in the United States, and the freedom rights’ struggles for Chicagoans focused on issues of

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376 Mae Y., interview by Author, September 27, 2016.
resisting machine politics in the city, desegregating schools, and access to housing.\textsuperscript{377}

The large black population in Chicago combined with discriminatory housing practices in
the city led to a housing shortage for African Americans. According to Arnold Hirsch,
this shortage led to the creation of the second ghetto in Chicago, “high-rise public
housing projects” that “reshaped, enlarged, and transformed the South Side Black Belt,”
the area that had housed the majority of the black population in the city since the early
twentieth century.\textsuperscript{378} While housing issues did not seem to impact the largely middle-
class Haitian community in Chicago, one oral history respondent described how
discriminatory housing practices kept Haitians from developing a centralized
neighborhood within the city. Instead, Raoul B. claims that Haitians bought homes where
they could, including in Evanston, a suburb north of Chicago that had a sizeable black
immigrant population.\textsuperscript{379}

The legacy of DuSable continued to be a key initiative for middle-class black
activists in Chicago, especially black women. Reed argues that during the Chicago
Freedom Movement, activists felt that “if knowledge of brown-skinned Jean Baptist
Pointe DuSable’s contribution to the city as its first permanent non-white settler were
made available, racial pride among black students and a greater awareness of black
accomplishment among white children would result in better race relations.”\textsuperscript{380} In 1961,
Dr. Margaret Burroughs and her husband, Charles, founded the DuSable Museum of
African American History in Hyde Park, a neighborhood at the center of black life in

\textsuperscript{377} Williams, 4.
\textsuperscript{378} Hirsch, 10.
\textsuperscript{380} Christopher Reed, \textit{The Chicago NAACP and the Rise of the Black Professional Leadership, 1910-1966}
(Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), 175. Also see Paul Kleppner, \textit{Chicago Divided: The Making of a Black Mayor}
(DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1985).
Chicago. The original name of the museum was the Ebony Museum of Negro Art and History, and it was the second major independent black museum in the United States. Burroughs had been a staple in the Chicago community for some time, gaining a reputation as a long-time teacher at DuSable High School and as a political activist and artist. Her political activism even earned her an F.B.I. file during the Cold War. When she and her husband started the museum in their home, it represented the culmination of activism by Burroughs and other educators, artists, historians, and community leaders striving to make black lives, history, and contributions more visible in the city.

In order to differentiate itself from Ebony magazine, the Chicago-based African-American publication, Burroughs changed its name to DuSable in 1968 because his legacy represented the origins of black contributions to Chicago. “DuSable was a figure whose mixed “French-Negro” Haitian heritage…over time came to symbolize black Chicago’s stake at mid-century in the founding of a modern city…” In this way, the idea of Haiti and the symbol of DuSable remained critical to black activism and consciousness in Chicago, especially for elite blacks.

DuSable’s legacy and mythology garnered recognition beyond the establishment of the DuSable Museum. In 1962, activists pushed for the creation of a DuSable Week to take place during the last week of August, commemorating the pioneer’s death on August 28, 1818. The Chicago Council of African American Heritage envisioned a week long celebration including cultural displays, a parade, picnics, and other festivities, and

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383 Ibid, 27.
council president Reginald Petty spoke to the *Chicago Defender* about how a celebration for DuSable was long overdue. “Only anti-Africanism, rationalized by lies about race to make possible anti-human discrimination, segregation, and Jim Crow, can explain the failure of the citizenry of Chicago to give appropriate recognition and honor to the city’s first settler…” He went on to say that by creating a DuSable Week, the city and Catholic Archdiocese would have the opportunity to “make amends for practically burying and ignoring the city’s first settler and illustrious Catholic of African descent that founded one of the foremost cities and industrial complexes in the world.”

Like other black Chicagoans, Petty recognized that the silence around DuSable’s legacy was directly linked to the discrimination black Chicagoans experienced. To recognize and honor DuSable represented the possibility for black lives to be recognized in the city as well. The call for a DuSable Week also included a request for a member of the Haitian community to participate, emphasizing how the idea of Haiti and the reality of a burgeoning Haitian diaspora in Chicago intersected and informed one another. The proposal was successful, and Mayor Richard Daley officially proclaimed DuSable “the first Chicago resident of record” in 1963. A resolution was also passed to create a monument for DuSable in the city, and the secretary of the African American Heritage Association noted that “[t]he achievement of a monument to DuSable in the city of Chicago will be a great contribution to the unity of the variety of ethnic groups that make up our city.” Activists again turned to the DuSable symbol to ameliorate racial tensions in Chicago.

385 Ibid.
386 Ibid.
388 Ibid.
The National DuSable Memorial Society (NDMS) remained central to efforts aimed at memorializing DuSable in the city. Even after Annie Oliver’s death in November 1962, the NDMS under the leadership of Ethel Nolan, ramped up its activism during this period. In 1963, the NDMS sponsored an event to commemorate their thirty-fifth year, and the group invited the DuSable High School chorus to sing and Elodie de Wendt Lane, to speak. De Wendt Lane gave her address to the group on Joseph Jeremie, who had just passed away. This event marked the inclusion of Haitians in maintaining the legacy of DuSable in the city and highlights the cyclical way the idea of Haiti and the reality of Haitian diaspora in Chicago intersected with black women playing critical roles in forging these connections.

In January 1965, the NDMS they held their thirty-fourth annual open house at the Jackson Park Fieldhouse. The program for this event followed in the familiar pattern of NDMS activism: linking the idea of Haiti, embodied by DuSable to the growing Haitian diaspora in the city and to black freedom struggles in Chicago. “Members of the society were delighted with the presence at this meeting of a fifth-generation descendant of Jean Baptiste Point DuSable…Mrs. DeNyse Pierre.” Pierre gave a speech to the group about her Haitian culture and her family’s ties to Chicago, acknowledging the unique connections between the two spaces, just as Joseph Jeremie had done in years prior. Per usual, the NDMS brought together members of the heterogeneous black community across Chicago and solidified the idea of and reality of Haiti in Chicago. The event also shows the growing role of Haitian people in Chicago in cultural activism around DuSable.

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In 1974, the NDMS gained another victory in the fight to memorialize DuSable with the dedication of a DuSable Suite at the Hyatt Regency Chicago. The newly built hotel, located on East Wacker Drive in downtown Chicago, made an important statement by naming its third-floor function room after DuSable. The ceremony brought out important members of the elite black community in Chicago, including Haitian Consul Serge Adam, the Vice President of Johnson Publishing Company Gertrude Johnson, and the president of the National Council of Negro Women’s Chicago chapter, Dr. Claudette McFarland. Their presence signaled the importance of this event to blacks across the city including members of the Chicago Haitian diaspora. Even though Duvalierism negatively impacted African American and Haitian relations, the DuSable legacy allowed for intra-racial coalitions to still form during this era. This event also represents the importance of black women in cultural activism surrounding DuSable in Chicago. These women linked DuSable, a Haitian man, to the plight of black Chicagoans in the twentieth century. Therefore, by standing up for his legacy, they were also fighting for the presence of the growing diasporic black population to be seen and respected in the city as well.

**The Legacy of the Ms. Defender Contest: Black Women as Diasporic Ambassadors**

Beauty pageants are another example of a space where black women asserted their citizenship rights and created diasporic connections despite the barriers of Duvalierism. According to Maxine Leeds Craig, black beauty pageants represented “one act of intervention in a long struggle over the representation of the race in which the image of black woman was a focal point.”391 Part of this long struggle included the Ms. Defender contest of the 1950s which provided opportunities for black women from

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Chicago and other areas of the diasporic Midwest to visit Haiti and become cultural ambassadors between these two societies. Even after the newspaper stopped sponsoring the Ms. Defender contest, its legacy survived in other black pageants of the 1970s, which provided opportunities for black women to travel between Haiti and Chicago. Despite the restrictions of the Duvalier era, African descendant women from Haiti and Chicago maintained and reshaped the unique connections between the two spaces.

During the summer of 1972, the Miss Black Chicago Pageant provided an opportunity for African descendant women to connect across the diaspora. The pageant reflected the Black is Beautiful politics of the era, which Leeds defines as “the new practices of self-representation and the newly expressed appreciation of dark skin and tightly curled hair that became widespread in African American communities in the late 1960s and early 1970s.”

The Southern Christian Leadership Committee’s Operation Breadbasket (SCLC), a civil rights organization brought to Chicago by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and headed by Reverend Jesse Jackson as a way to improve economic conditions for the black community, created the pageant in 1969. As Georgia Paige Welch notes, “by 1970, all-black pageants…flourished, displacing the integration of historically white pageants as a focal point of the Black freedom movement.” The 1972 pageant celebrated Chicago’s black community and had the active support and involvement of the community according to pageant director Jo Green. “Miss Black Chicago is a black

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392 Leeds, 23.
394 Georgia Paige Welch, “‘Up Against the Wall Miss America:’ Women’s Liberation and Miss Black America in Atlantic City, 1968,” Feminist Formations, 27, 2 (Summer 2015), 74.
beauty pageant…We thought it appropriate to hold the pageant in [Roberts 500 Room] a black-owned environment…” 395

The 1972 Ms. Black Chicago contest also included a Caribbean vacation as part of its impressive grand prize, and this choice highlights the significance of the idea of Haiti to black Chicagoans’ racial consciousness. While a Chicago Defender article reported that winner would be sent on a weekend visit to Nassau, a photo featured in the July 27, 1972 edition of Jet Magazine showed the winner traveling to Haiti. According to the caption, the contest winner, Sonia Hoard, and the first runner up, Valerie Brown, traveled to Haiti on a goodwill tour to “promote friendship between the U.S. and Haiti,” and they were accompanied by Kathryn Kaufmann, the newly crowned “Miss Wisconsin.” 396 Haitian Consul Serge Adam sent the three women off and Baby Doc welcomed them as official guests of the state of Haiti which indicates the important cultural and political agenda of this visit. 397 The timing of this visit is critical: Howard and her comrades became cultural ambassadors just as the idea of Haiti shifted towards a more negative viewpoint in the mind of Chicagoans. By experiencing the positive and cultural aspects of Haiti, these women tapped into the same feelings of black pride and connection to the black republic that had influenced black Chicagoans during the early twentieth century.

In 1973, three more young women from Chicago traveled to Haiti to participate in the Haitian Flower Festival. A long-time annual celebration in Haiti, the Flower Festival (also known as the Kanaval de Fleur or Carnival of Flowers) was reminiscent of the popular Mardi Gras festivities known as Kanaval. The Model-Cities Chicago Committee

397 Ibid.
on Urban Opportunity chose Elsa Perez, Deborah Hess, Tonya Flood to participate in this Haitian cultural event because of their leadership and involvement in their communities.398 This multiracial, multiethnic group of women served as Chicago’s representatives at the festival, and rode on top of a float with the Chicago seal during the festivities in Haiti. Mayor Richard Daley’s African American aide, Erwin A. France, accompanied Perez, Hess, and Flood to Haiti for the event and served as his official representative. Just as with the Ms. Black Chicago winners, Adam sent the women off and wished them well on their journeys to his homeland.399

This event was particularly significant because it was the last Flower Festival that would take place under Baby Doc emblematic of the declining tourism industry in Haiti at this point. The 1973 trip symbolized the end of one era and beginning of a new one, one that had been in process since Papa Doc took office in 1957. The days of black people coming to Haiti, having a rich cultural experience and coming back home with a new racial consciousness had ended; the idea of Haiti shifted to one of negativity and fear, despite the attempts of some in Chicago to continue the traditions of the past. What would come to replace the idea of Haiti for black Chicagoans was contingent on the reality of the growing Haitian diaspora in the city.

Haitian women in Chicago used pageantry as a space to forge diasporic ties and to redefine the idea of Haiti for those around them. Gerthie David, Ms. Haiti, the first-runner up in the 1975 Ms. Universe pageant, and member of the Chicago Haitian diaspora, reflected how Haitian women in beauty contests redefined understandings of black womanhood in Haiti and Chicago and maintained diasporic connections between

399 Ibid.
the two spaces during the Duvalier era. Haitians viewed David as a national heroine because she the second black woman to reach the finals at the Ms. Universe pageant, and as a dark-skinned woman, she represented the Haitian masses and the Black is Beautiful movement in the United States. However, her access to the pageant stage suggests that she may have been from the growing black middle-class which emerged under Papa Doc. David’s success was an even more significant feat considering this was the first time a Haitian representative had been present at the Ms. Universe competition since 1968. For these reasons, the New York Amsterdam News heralded David with “putting Haiti on the map,” or in some ways, back on the map.\footnote{J. Zamgra Browne, “Miss Universe Finalist Puts Haiti on the Map,” New York Amsterdam News, August 6, 1975.}

David wanted to be cultural ambassador for her country and hoped that her presence at the pageant would help revive Haiti’s waning tourism industry which suggests her interest in changing the negative idea of Haiti perpetuated by the international media.\footnote{Karen Odom, “She got there first,” Chicago Defender, October 4, 1975.} The first question Ms. Universe host Bob Barker asked the Haitian contestant highlights the popular imagery of Haiti: “I’ve read a lot about Haitian superstitions. Do you have any superstitions?”\footnote{Global Pageantry. “The Best of 1st Runner Up Miss Universe, #58 Gerthie David.” Online video clip. Beautycontests.blogspot.com, July 19, 2012. Accessed on March 5, 2016.} David used this opportunity to change the popular narrative of Haiti, choosing instead to focus her answer on how Haitians often put their best foot forward when trying to win a competition.\footnote{Ibid.} Instead of feeding into the popular narrative of Haiti of a superstitious, voudou mystery-land, David asserted that Haitians were hard workers who maintained a positive attitude no matter what they
were faced with. In this way, she used her platform to redefine the idea of Haiti and Haitians to an international audience.

David also had explicit feminist goals, wanting to “accomplish more recognition for Haitian women” in her role as Ms. Haiti, and this goal intersected with her respectability politics. She was very passionate about women’s liberation and aimed to use her platform to show Haitian women that there were opportunities for women beyond the patriarchal traditions of the country. During the question and answer portion of the Ms. Universe pageant, when asked what advice she would give next year’s Ms. Haiti, David responded that she would encourage her successor to have lots of personality, beauty, and social presence. David requested a translator for this question so she could answer the question in French, in which she was fluent.

David’s performance at the Ms. Universe pageant represents with how black beauty pageant contestants asserted a respectability politics as a way to combat racist stereotypes. She supported the idea that black women, especially those in pageantry who served as representatives for their culture and race, should maintain a certain amount of sophistication and personality as to counteract their negative portrayal. For Haitians, this sophistication included being able to speak French, and David asserted her ability to speak French which suggests that she was a member of the growing black middle class in Haiti. Thus, David both challenged and supported the middle-class respectability of black beauty pageant contestants, representing the complexities of black diasporic feminism of the era.

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404 Browne, 1975.
After the pageant, David migrated to Chicago and embodied key characteristics of the Haiti-Chicago diaspora: a middle-class Haitian woman who used familial connections to migrate to pursue higher education. Her younger sister, Michelle, living in Chicago at the time of the pageant, was pre-med at Roosevelt University. David used some of her pageant earnings to visit her sister, and this initial trip set the stage for her migration to the city. While in Chicago, she also visited the Operation People United to Serve Humanity (PUSH) Expo and the DuSable Museum. The Defender chronicled her visit and included a photo of David admiring “The Black Woman” sculpture at the museum. Its inclusion suggested that David was seen as a representative of the new black woman, proud of her history and her black beauty, symbolized by both David and the sculpture wearing Afro hair styles. After this trip, she moved to Chicago to study interior design at the Chicago Academy of Fine Art. Her migration brought her role of cultural ambassador for Haiti full circle, and it is likely that she continued to promote a positive idea of Haiti in her new homeland.

Black women from Chicago and Haiti used beauty contests to redefine the idea of Haiti and black womanhood in the 1970s. Despite the decline of tourism during the Duvalier years, they maintained diasporic connections between Haiti and Chicago. This current scholarship on pageantry notes that minority groups used these spaces to counter racism representations, express community pride, and reclaim their subjectivity in society. Black women from Haiti and Chicago were successful in these endeavors and

407 Ibid.
continued in the tradition of being critical diasporic actors. They built the diaspora by serving as cultural ambassadors and reshaping understandings of what it meant to be black, a woman, and an immigrant.

**A New Image of Haiti: NGOs, AIDS, and the Haitian Refugee Crisis**

Despite the efforts and successes of black people in Haiti and Chicago to redefine the idea of Haiti, Duvalierism was too powerful and the image of a poor and diseased populace who kept trying to escape to the U.S. by makeshift boats came to define the idea of Haiti after the 1970s. Instead of assisting these Haitian refugees, the United States government denied their legitimacy as exiles and routinely detained them before sending them back to Haiti. The only aid came from Americans who formed nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to assist Haitians on the island, but without including Haitian voices in their efforts, these initiatives were often unsuccessful in solving the issues that drove Haitians off the island. Moreover, the belief that the new and mysterious disease killing Americans, the acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), originated in Haiti furthered the belief that Haitians should stay in Haiti and were somewhat of a lost cause. Haitians immigrants in the United States challenged this narrative, and Chicago Haitians mobilized to help those in need in the homeland by sending goods and creating philanthropic organizations aimed at helping those in need. At the same time, Chicago Haitians also distanced themselves from the negative idea of Haiti by challenging the popular imagery of the island in the local press.

Violence in Haiti under the Duvaliers did not spare tourists, and reports of bad experiences published in mainstream Chicago press represented the first indicator that the idea of Haiti was shifting in the city. In January 1958, a Chicago woman claimed to have
been kidnapped, robbed, and assaulted by some Haitians in Port-au-Prince. Another woman from Chicago was injured in a bombing while she was vacationing in Haiti in June 1959. Madeline Graf was one of twenty injured when a bomb was thrown onto the dance floor of the International Casino in Port-au-Prince. Graf sustained injuries to her body and face, but she was lucky considering the bomb killed a Haitian girl. These reports indicate a new idea of Haiti; no longer a luxurious paradise, the island was a place of violence, chaos, and danger, similar to the popular perception during the U.S. occupation.

The Chicago press also portrayed Haitian goods as dangerous and undesirable, and a voudou doll recall in Chicago in early 1959 symbolized the idea of Haiti changing in the public imaginary. The *Tribune* alerted its readers to the doll recall, deeming it to be “a curse to [brought] Chicago and its suburbs through a recent import of thousands of the venomous trinkets which may cause sickness or death.” This mystical, sensational, and racist language continued over the course of the article, describing on the “blistering reaction” to the “poison dolls.” The Chicago Board of Health confiscated over seven thousand dolls, along with Haitian slippers, bracelets, and necklaces that had been sold at various retailers in the Chicagoland area. The volume of items suggests the popularity of Haitian goods in the community, but by the time the Chicago Board of Health deemed these items to be dangerous, Chicago residents were “urged to burn any Haitian voodoo trinket which resemble[d] the poisonous variety.” These extreme measures signify how

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412 Ibid.
413 Ibid.
Chicagoans and Americans would come to view Haiti, its goods, and its people over the next half-century.

Most scholars point to the Baby Doc era as the moment when Haiti became the “NGO Republic,” a country run by foreign volunteer organizations.⁴¹⁴ However, NGOs started making their imprint on Haiti during the Papa Doc era, which shows how quickly things started to deteriorate in the country. Chicagoans were some of the first to react to this shift and began sending volunteers and aid money to Haiti within a few years of Papa Doc’s term. When a drought ravaged the island in the late 1950s, the Chicago branch of the Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere (CARE) answered Papa Doc’s call for foreign assistance.⁴¹⁵ CARE, which had been founded in 1945 to send care packages to World War II survivors in the U.S., created an emergency program for Haiti to address the many people suffering from malnutrition on Haiti’s northern coast. This program called for the distribution of over three million pounds of food, and CARE focused special attention on Haitian children whom they send daily free lunch for the remainder of the school year.⁴¹⁶ CARE also solicited donations from Chicagoans for this project, which highlights the city’s communal involvement in Haitian aid through NGOs.

Focus Incorporated was another example of a Chicago-based NGO created to help the dire situation in Haiti. Chicago-area ophthalmologists and surgeons founded the Foreign Ophthalmologic Care from the United States (Focus) Incorporated. to help Haitian peasants suffering from various eye diseases.⁴¹⁷ According to Dr. James E.

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⁴¹⁵ The acronym behind CARE has been changed several times over the years. For example, it is also purported to stand for Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere.
⁴¹⁶ “CARE Food to Help 75,000 Haiti Victims,” Chicago Daily Defender, April 6, 1959.
McDonald, a white doctor who cofounded Focus, “the backbone of the operation has been a group of American eye surgeons who have given up their vacations to come to Haiti at their own expense to treat the poor. Many have been assisted by their wives.”

Indeed, the organization’s doctors and their wives spent about a month at a time on the island, and there had been thirty tours by 1964. Focus, like CARE, re-established a pattern that would define Haitian and American relations during the Duvalier era and beyond: Americans became the benevolent brother of Haitians just as they had been during the occupation in the early twentieth century. This time, this assistance was driven by NGOs, and the upsurge in NGOs created new connections between Haitians and Chicagoans specifically, one that would hinge upon the new idea of Haiti as a place that needed as much help as possible.

The abundance of NGOs in Haiti created discussion among the burgeoning Haitian diaspora in Chicago about their role in the country. A letter featured in the Defender in 1963 from Antonio Desrosiers, a Haitian businessman living in Chicago who had previously been interviewed by the paper, exemplified this discourse. Desrosiers, critiqued foreign aid in Haiti for claiming to help the country but instead attempting to overthrow the current government for personal gain. “Programs of this nature debilitate our country and retard its progress.” Desrosiers called for foreign aid to assist an “economic revolution in Haiti, which is needed more than ever now.” Once such program existed, it would receive “the approval of a number of Haitians here and at home.”

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418 Ibid.
420 Ibid.
421 Ibid.
Desrosiers’ letter highlights important aspects of the changing idea of Haiti. It is clear from this letter that Desrosiers was aware that the popular image of Haiti had become one of a country in need of development. Just as during the occupation, Haiti symbolized the cautionary tale of how resisting modernity could lead to vast poverty and hunger. As a Haitian now living in the Chicago, Desrosiers had first-hand experience with how the media portrayed his country versus what life there was really like. Thus, he felt it was his duty to challenge this narrative to get the sort of assistance that he felt the country truly needed. In this way, Desrosiers directly addressed the NGO’s and encouraged them to really meet the needs of the people rather than just asserting their own agenda. He represents a vocal and active member of the diaspora and like many other Chicago Haitians, he felt it was important to publically address Haitian affairs so that a Haitian voice could shape the idea of Haiti in the city.

The rise of NGOs was one response to the rising number of Haitians escaping to the United States via makeshift boats, a crisis which continued through the end of the twentieth century. The first Haitian refugees arrived on the Florida shore in the early 1960s, but the migration reached crisis levels in the 1970s and 1980s. As the Miami Herald notes, “the U.S. government had no interest in these humans and no sympathy because they didn’t flee a Communist country,” and the treatment the first refugees received foreshadowed how those to come would be received. 422 According to historian Jana Lipton, “after François “Papa Doc” Duvalier’s death in 1971, there was a steady stream of undocumented Haitian men and women who came to the United States via

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small boats fleeing political violence, torture, and economic deprivation.”\textsuperscript{423} Scholar Christopher Mitchell estimates about seven thousand Haitians arrived annually by boat in the 1970s, and this number quadrupled by the 1980s.\textsuperscript{424} Despite the refugees’ claim of political persecution, the purported democracy in Haiti and alliance with the United States in the Cold War made these migrants undesirable. The U.S. government and media portrayed these Haitians as the poor, dirty, and unintelligent Other, just looking for an economic handout the United States. They routinely denied Haitian applications for asylum and instead detained them or sent them back to Haiti, and the media created the trope of the Haitian boat person which redefined the idea of Haiti to Americans in general and Chicagoans in particular.

A small number of the refugees (about 50,000) were resettled into the Haitian communities across the United States, and the Miami diaspora was born during this era. There is evidence that a small number of these refugees were sent to Chicago, anywhere from 1 to 5%. Despite these small numbers, the national controversy surrounding the Haitian “boat people” mobilized this Midwestern diaspora to respond in various ways.\textsuperscript{425} A Haitian immigrant living in Chicago since 1965, Robert Benodin, wrote a letter to \textit{Chicago Tribune} to address “the sad plight of Haitian boat people.”\textsuperscript{426} According to his letter, the plight of the refugees deeply affected the Chicago Haitian community, “being too familiar with the oppression in Haiti.”\textsuperscript{427} He detailed the precarious circumstances of


\textsuperscript{425} An April 1981 \textit{Chicago Tribune} article quoted 500 refugees being resettled in Chicago during the summer of 1979. See Howard Tyner, “‘Boatlift’ Cubans didn’t materialize in Chicago, \textit{Chicago Tribune}, April 28, 1981.


\textsuperscript{427} Ibid.
these individuals: “Since most of these people came from extremely poor rural areas, they financed their escape by selling everything they owned. Their return to the hell they were hoping to escape is mentally more cruel than the reprisals they will face.”\textsuperscript{428} Benodin finished his letter by pointing out the hypocrisy of the U.S. policy towards Haitian refugees: “We can only hope…that the decision to return the Haitian boat people to Haiti was not motivated by politics and racism.”\textsuperscript{429} This letter shows the far-reaching impact of the Haitian refugee crisis; even though the majority of the refugees did not resettle in Chicago, their struggles were still felt there. While most the previous migrants that had come to Chicago were from middle-class backgrounds, the plight of their less-advantaged comrades did not escape them; Duvalierism affected people across class, as Benodin notes. Benodin’s letter, like Desrosiers’, shows how the Chicago Haitian community utilized the local media to challenge the negative idea of Haiti.

The Haitian refugee crisis remained a critical issue for the Chicago Haitian diaspora, and it also mobilized the African American community in the city, evidenced by Andrew Young’s decision to come speak in Chicago in May 1980. The diplomat and civil rights activist from Georgia addressed a Chicago crowd about the Miami riots that had recently ravaged the city in the wake of the acquittal of four police officers in the death of Arthur McDuffie. On May 17, 1980, police officers brutally beat McDuffie, a black insurance agent, to death (even as he was handcuffed) and when they were acquitted, three days of rioting resulted in 18 people killed, 350 injured, and $100 million in damage.\textsuperscript{430} Young tied McDuffie’s death to the plight of Haitian refugees in his

\textsuperscript{428} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{429} Ibid.
speech, noting how Haitians “were harassed and jailed and virtually ignored by the federal immigration policy.”\textsuperscript{431} He decried the United States government for their biased policy against Haitians. “Everyone rallied around to do something for the Haitians, but the federal government did not respond.”\textsuperscript{432} Young’s speech highlighted the connections between African Americans and Haitians’ issues, sustained despite the shifting idea of Haiti. When Young talked about “everyone rally[ing]” around the Haitian refugees, he was likely talking about the many African American activists, including Jesse Jackson and the National Urban League, who advocated for the fair and just treatment of the Haitian refugees. The growing heterogeneity of blacks across the nation inspired these activists and Young to connect with Haitians on the various issues blacks were facing, and how they were all tied to issues of race.

The refugees who did settle in Chicago highlight another critical way that this crisis impacted the Haitian diaspora in the city. In October 1980, the \textit{Los Angeles Times} featured an article on the Haitian refugee experience in Chicago. Jean Pierre left Haiti with his wife and eight children on a small boat along with eighteen other refugees. After they were detained in a Miami camp for three months, Haitians in Chicago collected over $1000 for airfare for Pierre and ten others to resettle in Chicago. Father Claude Souffrant, a Catholic priest at St. Clotilde’s Church in Chicago addressed the plight of these refugees and the precarious nature of sending them back to Haiti in the article. Souffrant, a Haitian migrated to Chicago in 1973, denounced the idea that these refugees were simply seeking economic assistance: “Those who are fleeing now from the poorer

\textsuperscript{432} Ibid.
classes, but that doesn’t mean they aren’t escaping the political tyranny.”\textsuperscript{433} These resettled refugees, including Jean, were hesitant to speak about the state of Haiti, fearful of its impact on the family members they had left behind. “Their families would be put in jail or even worse, if their pictures are taken and they are quoted saying they are seeking a better life in another country.”\textsuperscript{434} Despite not having a job or much of anything to call their own, Pierre and the other refugees remained optimistic: “After all…this is America. Anything is possible.”\textsuperscript{435} This article shows that the Haitian refugee crisis affected Chicago directly and pinpoints how the Chicago diaspora would become more class diverse based on these newest migrants. Further, it highlights how the crisis mobilized the diaspora into action in Chicago evidenced by the money collected by Chicago Haitians for the refugees.

In September 1981, United States President Ronald Reagan signed Executive Order 12324, which mandated the return of all those who landed on U.S. soil from the high seas, but this did not stop Haitians from attempting to escape to the U.S. via boats and rafts. African American journalist Les Payne critiqued the policy: “[T]he Reagan administration, in league with the Duvalier government and probably in violation of international law, has authorized the U.S. Coast Guard to search Haitian peasants’ vessels on the high seas and turn around those bearing refugees.”\textsuperscript{436} Scholar Georges Fouron attests to the fact that Duvalier received $11 million for signing and following Reagan’s policy. Father Souffrant also spoke out against the biased treatment that Haitians refugees received, while Haitian refugees in Chicago gave credence to the repressive regime as the

\textsuperscript{434} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{435} Ibid.
reason for their escape, one noting that he would only be able to go back home when the political situation of Haiti improved. Many of the Haitians interviewed for the Tribune piece refused to give their full names, to protect their family left behind in Haiti. Again, these issues helped to define the Haitian experience for its newest migrants, which helped to reshape the Chicago diaspora. The bravery of the Haitian refugees in Chicago who shared their story with the local press exemplifies how the Chicago Haitian diaspora used their voice in the hostland to challenge stereotypes about their homeland, and in this case, to assert that Haitian refugees were in fact refugees and not economic opportunists.

The idea of Haiti as an impoverished and troubled nation solidified once the AIDS epidemic hit. In the early 1980s, after a group of men in Los Angeles contracted a mysterious virus that compromised their immune systems, more and more cases emerged. The U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) began doing research on the mystery illness that was quickly spreading nationally and internationally. On March 4, 1983, they published a report in the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) citing the origin of AIDS in four places: homosexuals, heroin addicts, hemophiliacs, and Haitians, better known as the 4H Club. Fouron notes that Haitians joined the list after doctors diagnosed some of the detained Haitian refugees with the virus. Not only did this accentuate the new image of the diseased and dangerous Haitian refugee, it created a panic around Haitian presence.

The panic in Chicago began when the first woman in the city died from AIDS in July 1983. In response, a Chicago hospital put a newly born, healthy Haitian baby in isolation despite the fact that the woman who died was a Mexican immigrant. According to Dr. KT Reddi of the Chicago Health Department, the lack of knowledge around AIDS

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437 John C. White, “Refugees from Haiti: There is nowhere else,” Chicago Tribune, November 1, 1981.
led to “unjustified” actions, like the quarantine of the Haitian baby.\textsuperscript{438} By the end of that year, three more had died of AIDS in Chicago including a Haitian man. The \textit{Tribune} noted that the man had been treated in Chicago for the virus before returning to Haiti, where he died. It is unclear why this man was in Chicago, but his return to Haiti suggests he could have been a refugee who was sent back after his diagnosis. These cases led the Howard Brown Memorial Clinic in Chicago to receive federal funding to research AIDS. It was one of five clinics to pursue AIDS research across the country under a $16 million federal research grant.\textsuperscript{439} These instances explain the real-life impact of the CDC declaring Haitians as an originator of AIDS, conflating Haiti and AIDS in a time where the idea of Haiti was already in decline. As Chicagoans read about these stories in the local media, it likely shaped how they interacted with the Haitian members of their community. Fouron calls this “the discrepant sense of belonging U.S. residents of Haitian ancestry experienced in the United States during the AIDS crisis.”\textsuperscript{440}

Haitians on the island also felt the negative impact of the AIDS crisis. They challenged the assertion that the virus originated there and suggested that American tourists had introduced the virus to Haitians. Dr. Ary Bordes, the Haitian minister of health, also called out the flaws in the CDC sampling and classification methods, which led the CDC to agree to reviewing its findings.\textsuperscript{441} Just as Desrosiers, Benodin, and Souffrant challenged stereotypes about Haitians and Haitian refugees in the media, Dr. Bordes and other Haitian officials refuted the AIDS stigma and used a Chicago press outlet to do so.

\textsuperscript{440} Fouron, 706.
Historian David Nicholls argues that there were two racial manifestations of Haiti’s international relations in the late twentieth century: the treatment of the boat people and the AIDS stigma. How did these two issues conflate to redefine Haiti in the mind of Americans? In Chicago, the shift towards a completely negative view of Haiti undoubtedly affected how the members of the Haitian community there were treated. However, Haitians fought back against these stereotypes and called out the racial bias in the treatment they received by engaging in public discourse on Haiti in the city. This activism would continue into the 1990s and early 2000s, as the idea and reality of Haiti would continue to change.

**Conclusion**

In June 1983, Chicago celebrated its 150th anniversary with various cultural and historical exhibits, including ones honoring DuSable and Haitian art. There were 108 pieces of Haitian art displayed at Chicago Cultural Center, loaned from Davenport Art Gallery of Iowa and Haitian diplomat Claude Auguste Douyon’s private collection. The DuSable Museum created a show highlighting DuSable’s life and Haitian culture for the event, and art connoisseur Paul Waggoner, who was known as “a tireless promoter of Haitian art in Chicago for the last eight years,” curated the show of thirty paintings, twenty metal sculptures, twenty-five other pieces in a show titled “Haitian Art Since 1975” at his gallery.

These displays highlighted Chicago’s longstanding Haiti connection, something that black pioneers in Chicago had been fighting to make more visible for almost a

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443 Ibid.
The growing Haitian diaspora in Chicago, due to Duvalierism and other Cold War era global shifts, helped to make this connection more salient by the time Chicago celebrated its 150th anniversary. The continued importance of DuSable and his Haitian heritage to Chicago culture and identity and the important role of black women in forging diasporic connections represent areas of continuity from the early twentieth century through the Duvalier era. At the same time, the changing idea of Haiti due to the refugee and AIDS crises created both connections and disconnections between Haiti and Chicago. While Chicago politicians mobilized around the refugee crisis, other Chicagoans turned away from Haiti out of fear. Even after Duvalierism ended in early 1986, its legacy continued to impact the global, national, and local events. Namely, the refugee crisis and the AIDS epidemic shaped and reshaped the idea of Haiti as the diaspora in Chicago grew and became more established in the hostland, especially the second generation.

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444 Ibid.
Chapter Four
A Moment of Acceptance:
The Tenth State in the Chicago Haitian Diaspora, 1986-2009

After living in Chicago for twenty-six years, Julio Crespe returned to Haiti in 1988, but home was very different from the place he had left. Once known as the City of Poets, Jeremie became a ghost town during the Duvalier era which decimated the country’s population and resources. When asked what he thought of his homeland after more than two decades away, Crespe responded, “Don’t ask. I’m going back to Chicago.”445 The overthrow of Jean Claude Duvalier in the early months of 1986 seemed to signal a turn towards better days in Haiti, but Duvalierism continued in the country after his departure. The instability and violence in Haiti in the 1990s and 2000s led to the complete acceptance of a new homeland for many in the diaspora.

This chapter examines the post-Duvalier period, 1986-2009, in order to investigate how sociopolitical shifts in Haiti and Chicago interacted to create a more established, visible, and heterogeneous diaspora in the Midwestern metropolis. After Baby Doc was overthrown and exiled in January of 1986, Haitians in the Chicago diaspora became more involved in the homeland again. The era of despair and silence finally ended and a brief moment of hope reverberated across Haiti. This hopeful moment led to the historic democratic election of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a Haitian priest and political outsider, in 1990. One of the first policies Aristide enacted was the declaration of the diaspora as the tenth state of Haiti, which signaled the homeland’s recognition of its diaspora’s importance and strength.446 However, this hopeful moment was fleeting;

446 Haiti is divided into nine regions, known as departments or states. By declaring the Haitian diaspora the tenth state, Aristide acknowledged the importance of the growing population of Haitians living outside of
Aristide was overthrown less than one year after taking office. The instability and despair of the Duvalier era returned albeit in new ways, and the precarious situation in the homeland exacerbated the Haitian refugee crisis. The exile of both Duvalier and Aristide shaped the idea of Haiti in Chicago.

The contradiction of this moment serves as the focus of this chapter. The Haitian diaspora was recognized as a critical segment of the homeland at the same time as the possibility of their return to the homeland diminished. This was true for Haitians in Chicago: when Duvalierism ended, the window of opportunity to return home quickly closed. For those who did return, Haiti was not home as they had known it. Crespe voiced the sadness and sense of loss that many Haitian immigrants across the diaspora felt upon their return to the island, and his quote, “I’m going back to Chicago,” signaled a shift towards the recognition of the hostland as the new homeland. The 1986-2009 period represented a moment of acceptance of Chicago as the new homeland for Haitians due to the longstanding connections that had formed between the two societies, the growing diaspora there, and the unstable economics and politics in Haiti. Family reunification and network migration brought more Haitians to Chicago during this era, and scholars estimate that the population grew from approximately 3,000 to 10,000, while community leaders estimate 30,000 to 35,000. \footnote{Encyclopedia of Chicago Online, “Haitians,” William Leslie Balan-Gaubert, http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/561.html.}

These migrants did not turn away from Haiti completely, and they formed many Haitian-based organizations during this period. The Haitian refugee crisis inspired the formation of many of these organizations. The resettlement of Haitian refugees—largely...
poor and from the Haitian underclass--in Chicago added class variation to the middle-
class base of the diaspora there which exposed class tensions within the diaspora as
Haitians transferred the class and color politics of the homeland to their diasporic
hostland. Furthermore, the 1.5 (children who migrated) and second generations (children
born to migrants) of Haitians in the city made the diaspora more visible and active within
the city, but the duality of their existence sometimes led to generational tensions with the
older migrants, a point which I will explore in this chapter. Finally, black women
prevailed in their efforts to get DuSable officially recognized in the city, and Chicago
Haitians took the lead in commemorating their Haitian ancestor in the city he founded.

Global, national, and local developments framed the response to Aristide’s
overthrow in Chicago and elsewhere. The Cold War ended with the collapse of the Berlin
Wall in 1989 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, and the United States
ascended to its role as the prominent global superpower. The war on terror and the war on
drugs replaced the Cold War in the United States due in large part to a shift towards right
wing politics nationally and globally, and the epidemic of mass incarceration was one
result of this change. These massive global and national shifts matched the “unsettled”
nature of Chicago during the 1980s and 1990s, which scholar Larry Bennett attributes to
a population decline, the end of industrial dynamism, and “overstressed race relations.”

The latter, a culmination of racial tension in the city since the turn of the century, did not
stop the historic 1983 election of Harold Washington, the first black mayor in Chicago.
“His victory revived a national black empowerment movement mired by splits and apathy
[and] in a decidedly conservative era, Chicago was an intriguing anachronism, a beacon

448 Larry Bennett, “Introduction,” in Fire on the Prairie: Harold Washington, Chicago Politics, and the
from the country’s heartland that projected into the future more encouraging possibilities.”

Washington’s mayoral tenure lasted until his untimely death in 1987, but his legacy set the foundation for the rise of Barack Obama. Thus, as Haitians accepted Chicago as their new home, a new era of black leadership took prominence in the city, and Haitians joined the ranks of these elected officials including Judge Lionel Jean-Baptiste, the first Haitian alderman in the Chicagoland area.

The end of Duvalierism and the election and overthrow of Aristide mobilized the Haitian diaspora across the US, and Haitians in Chicago created various organizations to not only help the homeland but also to connect with each other across the city. Further, as the 1990s and 2000s went on, the second generation of Haitians became the new leaders of the diaspora, including Senator Kwame Raoul who replaced Obama in the Illinois state senate in 2004. The second generation helped to cement the long-standing cultural, social, and political influence of Haitians in Chicago. Together, Chicago Haitians redefined the idea of Haiti for themselves and others.

A Brief Moment of Hope: The End of Duvalierism in Haiti and in Chicago

The end of Jean Claude Duvalier’s reign had been a long-time coming, and the impact of this shift was felt across Haiti and its diaspora, including in Chicago. According to historian James Ferguson, Duvalier’s slow dismissal of the old guard—the politicians that had kept his father in power—in favor of the business elite destabilized his regime over the 1980s. At the same time, the mounting rebellion of the Haitian people, including the Catholic clergy and laity, put pressure on an increasingly unstable

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government.\textsuperscript{450} By early 1986, the growing resistance became too much for Duvalier to withstand, especially as the Reagan administration joined the call for him to step down. On February 7, 1986, he escaped to France in a U.S. Air Force cargo plane.

The \textit{Chicago Tribune} covered the end of Duvalier’s reign the day after his escape, highlighting the role of the American government in Baby Doc’s ultimate demise and the interest of Chicagoans in Haitian affairs. Even though the Reagan administration initially denied involvement in Duvalier’s exile, \textit{Tribune} journalist Terry Atlas asserted that they were “intimately involved.”\textsuperscript{451} In fact, the United States had been involved in Haitian affairs for some time, and during Baby Doc’s reign, they donated millions to his government, including business investments which aimed to further integrate Haiti into the U.S. economy.\textsuperscript{452} As the situation in Haiti became increasingly unstable, the United States pulled their support for Duvalier. When he finally agreed to step down, the United States arranged for a military plane to take him to a “comfortable life in France-sustained there by a Swiss bank account filled over the previous decades with millions of dollars from the Haitian treasury.”\textsuperscript{453}

The Haitian people celebrated Duvalier’s exile. According to the \textit{Tribune}, “the capital exploded in frenzied dancing…Everywhere there were smiles and singing. Hundreds rode by hanging from colorful painted buses, called \textit{Taptaps}, waving branches and the blue-and-red pre-Duvalier flag…Children, women, young people, and grey-haired men were embracing each other and sometimes crying.”\textsuperscript{454} One man, Jean Claude

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\textsuperscript{450} See Bell and Ferguson.
\textsuperscript{451} Terry Atlas, “‘We didn’t really need to,’ aide says,” \textit{Chicago Tribune}, February 8, 1986.
\textsuperscript{452} Alex Dupuy, \textit{The Prophet and Power: Jean Bertrand Aristide, the International Community, and Haiti} (Lanham: Rowan and Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 47
\textsuperscript{453} Dubois, 358.
\textsuperscript{454} Terry Atlas, “‘We didn’t really need to,’ aide says,” \textit{Chicago Tribune}, February 8, 1986.
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Tournier, summarized the newfound liberty now that Duvalier was gone: “An entire
generation has never felt safe.”455 Historian James Ferguson calls February 7, 1986 a day
of liberation in Haiti because Duvalierism had been contingent on the passivity and
powerlessness” of the people; now that Baby Doc was gone, the people felt free and safe
again.456

Unfortunately, the end of Duvalier did not bring the end of Duvalierism; violence
and unrest erupted in the country within a few hours of his departure. “Looting spread
through the city as buildings owned by those close to the Duvalier regime were ripped
apart.”457 General Henri Namphy took over as interim leader of the country, but he had
served under Duvalier. The long-term suppression of political opponents meant a lack of
new leadership options after his expulsion, so it is no surprise that a former Duvalier
official took power. Moreover, Namphy refused to punish former officials from the
Duvalier regime for their humans’ rights abuses, making it difficult for the country to
move on from the atrocities past. Thus, even as they celebrated and experienced a
moment of relief when Duvalier left, the Haitian people were still at the mercy of
Duvalierism and unsure what new direction to take for change.

Even though some of Duvalier’s exiles returned to the island after his departure,
this did not alleviate the issue of future leadership on the island. Historian David Nicholls
and others claim that there was distrust for the returnees, seen as disloyal for leaving
while others were forced to stay behind and live through the violence and repression.
Therefore, the question remained: who would lead Haiti? Even after a new constitution
was passed in March 1987 which included agrarian reform, established Creole as the

455 Ibid.
457 Terry Atlas, “‘We didn’t really need to,’ aide says,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 8, 1986.
official language of Haiti along with French, and declared healthcare, food, housing, and education as human rights, the uncertainty and unrest continued.\textsuperscript{458} On November 29, 1987, at least 34 Haitians were killed and 75 wounded while they attempted to vote.\textsuperscript{459} This day would be remembered as “Bloody Sunday” and signaled that the transition from Duvalierism would not be easy.

After two military coups in 1988, the moment of hope post-Duvalier quickly dissolved, and the political future of Haiti remained uncertain. In response, Haitians continued to seek refuge elsewhere, and the plight of the Haitian refugees surged which mobilized the diaspora across the globe. In Chicago, Reverend Alain Rocourt, a Haitian bishop who oversaw the Miami Methodist relief agency that serviced almost 100,000 Haitian refugees, addressed a group of college students at North Park University (NPU). Located on the North side of Chicago, the Christian university invited Rocourt to speak on the political repression and violence in Haiti, something Rocourt himself had experienced firsthand. While in Haiti, Rocourt had been a target because of his political views, and after a group of armed \textit{Tonton Macoutes} attacked his home, Rocourt went into hiding and assumed an alias so he could escape. He declared: “We expected death…The booming noise of the hand grenades exploding against the grilles [on the house’s doors and windows] near to you, the whole darkness becoming light.”\textsuperscript{460} Rocourt was lucky to have family members established in the United States, including a relative who taught at NPU.

Rocourt’s connection to Chicago was beyond familial; NPU had been sending students to Haiti for volunteer work for several years, and Rocourt developed a

\textsuperscript{458} See Dubois and Ferguson.
\textsuperscript{459} Dupuy, 62.
relationship with faculty member Reverend Timothy Heintzelman. Rocourt embodied the various Haitian diasporas connected through family and kinship networks. His invitation to speak at NPU also shows the importance of the idea of Haiti to Chicagoans and his relative, a professor at NPU, highlights the middle-class character of Chicago’s diasporic community. Finally, his scholarly connection once again shows the importance of educational institutions in facilitating Haiti and Chicago connections and the growth of the Chicago Haitian diaspora.

The end of Duvalierism created a brief moment of hope in Haiti and its diaspora, including in Chicago. After almost thirty years of violent repression and increasing poverty under the Duvaliers, Haitians on and off the island rejoiced at the prospect of change. However, this moment was short-lived and instability and violence defined the period from 1986-1989. Haitians in Chicago felt the impact of this moment and kept up with the tense situation through Chicago press outlets which covered the Haitian situation in great detail. The Haitian community in Chicago discussed what would come next on the homeland, which highlights how the changes during this period brought the Chicago diaspora together.

**The Tenth State: Chicago’s Response to the Rise and Fall of Jean Bertrand Aristide and the Haitian Refugee Crisis**

The uncertainty after Duvalier’s exile momentarily ended after the momentous election of Jean Bertrand Aristide in 1990. Charismatic and brilliant, Aristide came from humble beginnings and was a dark-skinned man, both of which allowed him to connect with the Haitian masses. He was openly critical of Duvalierism and advocated Liberation Theology through his mass-left-wing party *Fanmi Lavalas* (The Flood). Developed by Catholic priests in Latin America during the 1960s and 1970s, Liberation Theology
focused on the needs of the poor and called for the social and political transformation of society as a fulcrum for salvation. Catholic leaders in the Vatican and across the world rejected Liberation Theology, viewing it as dangerous and Communist-inspired.\textsuperscript{461}

Differently, the Haitian people were inspired by his message, and their support propelled him to become the first democratically elected president in Haiti’s history. As scholar Alex Dupuy argues: “Aristide had emerged since the overthrow of the Duvalier regime as the single most important symbol of resistance to the ignominious and kleptomaniac neo-Duvalierist dictatorships.”\textsuperscript{462}

Aristide’s election represented an important moment for the Haitian diaspora because they played an integral role in getting him elected as well. Once in office, he declared the diaspora as tenth state of the Cabinet of Haiti, affirming the integral role of the diaspora in homeland politics.\textsuperscript{463} Chicago’s diaspora was especially critical to Aristide’s understanding of the tenth state, symbolized by Aristide’s choice of Harry, a Haitian man living in Chicago since the early 1970s, to serve as official minister of the tenth state and the master of ceremonies at Aristide’s inauguration.\textsuperscript{464} Fouché thus functioned as a diasporic conduit and representative for Aristide in the hostland, and he helped the newly elected president set up a headquarters for the Haitian tenth state in Chicago which they called the Arrondissement de Chicago.\textsuperscript{465} For the first time in almost forty years, things started to look up for Haitians across the diaspora.

\textsuperscript{462} Dupuy, 74.
\textsuperscript{464} Richman, and Balan-Gaubert, 92.
\textsuperscript{465} Ibid.
However, on September 30, 1991, General Raoul Cedras, a light-skinned U.S. trained military officer, led a coup that overthrew Aristide. According to Dupuy, Aristide had been in a precarious position from the start of his term, “a tight rope without a net.”\textsuperscript{466} The threat of coups and assassinations consumed his presidency immediately, which put Aristide on the defensive. He fell victim to using some of the same violent and repressive tactics that his predecessors employed to consolidate power, and this ultimately led to his overthrow. Aristide escaped to France via plane, just as Baby Doc had done, and after his exile, the violent reprisal against the \textit{Lavalas} commenced.

Chicago press closely followed these Haitian developments and reported in early October 1991 that approximately thirty Haitians were killed and two hundred were injured in the immediate wake of Aristide’s departure, most of them his supporters.\textsuperscript{467} The violence and terrorism against Aristide supporters would continue, which opened the floodgates for more Haitian refugees seeking asylum elsewhere.

The United States continued their racist immigration policies of the 1980 and sent Haitian refugees fleeing post-Aristide to Guantanamo Bay among other detention centers. According to the Chicago-based African American magazine, \textit{Jet}, “Only 1.9 percent of the Haitians seeking asylum over the last seven years were admitted, compared to the average admission rate of 23.4 percent for those seeking political refuge.”\textsuperscript{468}

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\textsuperscript{466} Dupuy, 102.  \\
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refugees. In Chicago, Haitian activists led weekly marches to the federal government building to protest the inhumane treatment their compatriots received.\footnote{Marjorie Valburn, “Haitian-American Politics in Chicago,” aliciapatterson.org, May 4, 2011.}

Additionally, Illinois senator Jesse Jackson took an active role in protesting the subpar treatment that Haitian refugees received, highlighting the important and long-term connections between African Americans and Haitians in Chicago. In December 1991, Jackson alongside Senator Charles Rangel of New York, visited Guantanamo to survey the living conditions of the Haitian people detained there. Jackson called this journey “a moral obligation,” and noted that the United States’ policies towards Haitians refugees represented “a double standard for African people.”\footnote{Jackson, Rangel Visit Haitian Refugees at US Naval Base and Request Asylum For Them,” \textit{Jet Magazine}, December 23, 1991.} Jackson specifically called out President George Bush’s inaction and the precarious position Haitians in particular faced: “And if you’re poor, foreign, and Black, you don’t even get on the radar of the screen of George Bush.”\footnote{Ibid.} Jackson’s poignant critiques of the plight of the Haitian refugees emphasized the status of Haitians as triple minorities.

Other black Chicagoans brought attention to the Haitian refugee crisis and the double standard against them. Famous dancer and choreographer Katherine Dunham, began a hunger strike in early 1992 in support of the Haitian refugees. Despite being in her early eighties, Dunham felt obligated to put her health on the line to bring attention to the precarious position of Haitian refugees. “She called reporters to her hospital bedside [in East St. Louis, IL] and pledged she wouldn’t stop fasting until “the Haitians who are refugees now are allowed to stay in this country until there’s proof that it would be safe
to go back.” Exiled Haitian president Aristide called Dunham to thank her for her support but urged her to stop the hunger strike, a gesture which suggests that Aristide knew the tenth state included African Americans who had forged a deep bond with Haitians across the diaspora over time. Dunham and Jackson were not the only black Chicagoans to protest the treatment of the Haitian refugees; comedian and activist Dick Gregory was arrested after chaining himself to the front door of the federal courthouse in East St. Louis in support of the refugee crisis. These examples represent the historic connections between blacks in Haiti and Chicago that continued through the end of the twentieth century.

While most of the refugees were resettled into Miami and New York, a small number were brought to Chicago, changing the class makeup of this diasporic community. According to a Tribune article from April 1992, five Haitian refugees had recently been reunited with family in Chicago with the help of the Catholic Charities of Chicago. Mary Campbell, program director of the Illinois Conference of Churches was quoted in the article: “Last month was my first experience with Haitians. I didn’t even know there were Haitians in Chicago.” This suggests that the hidden enclave of Haitians in Chicago was a major reason that the Midwestern metropolis was not a favored spot for refugee resettlement. However, about two hundred refugees called Chicago home by the end of 1995, and this increase represents not only the continued importance of

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473 Ibid.
475 Ibid.
family reunification to the formation of the Haitian diaspora in Chicago but also the growing visibility of Haitians in Chicago during the 1990s.\textsuperscript{476}

Haitian refugees in Chicago dealt with similar difficulties as Haitians settling in New York and Miami. The fast pace of the city, American food, and learning English represented major areas of adjustment. A twenty-one year old Haitian man who asked to remain anonymous in a \textit{Tribune} article due to the tumult in Haiti and fear for his family’s life, described being “excited by all the cars and pedestrians on the streets and amazed by Chicago’s skyscrapers, but he would still prefer to be back in Haiti if it were peaceful.”\textsuperscript{477} This same young man, along with his three Haitian roommates (also refugees), caught the Metra train each day for their English classes at Truman College and made sure they were home by 5pm in order to protect themselves from “the dangers faced on the city’s streets.”\textsuperscript{478} Haitian refugees in Chicago had to adapt to a new way of life, and they traded in the dangers of Haiti to the dangers of Chicago’s inner city violence, something no one had likely prepared them for.

The new dangers of Chicago found two young Haitian men in police custody in July 1993 due in large part to misunderstanding, miscommunication, and the difficulties of adjusting to life in a new place. As they walked to a store in the Rogers Park neighborhood, they encountered a woman in a red mini-skirt whom they assumed was a neighbor striking up a conversation with them. However, she was not a neighbor; she was a police decoy staking out the area, and the two men were arrested and charged for

\textsuperscript{478} Ibid.
soliciting a prostitute.\textsuperscript{479} Martine Théodore, executive director of the Haitian-American Community Center in Chicago, helped the two men find an attorney and blamed the entire incident on the language barrier.\textsuperscript{480} This incident highlights how precarious the hostland could be for the newest Haitian refugees living in Chicago. These “migrants--most of them male, young, and naïve to American customs--are running into problems daily with police, landlords, employers, bill collectors, and street gangs.”\textsuperscript{481} The transition proved to be more difficult than they likely imagined.

Martine Théodore and other Haitians living in Chicago stepped in where they could to help the newest migrants. André “Patrick” Augustin, a Haitian American, often greeted the refugees upon their arrival to O’Hare Airport by speaking Creole to them.\textsuperscript{482} Augustin also hosted a local Haitian radio show, called “The Voice Back Home” which provided a place for the newest migrants to share their experiences in Haiti and in Chicago.\textsuperscript{483} Similarly, other Chicago Haitians donated their clothes and home goods to the refugees while others gave their time to help the refugees manage their new homes and grocery shop. Several of the oral history participants described volunteering to help teach these newest migrants English as well. Carolina G. cited a Haitian bilingual program at Bowen High School on the south side of the city assisted the newest Haitian migrants during the 1980s and 1990s.\textsuperscript{484} In many ways, the Haitian refugee crisis’ impact on Chicago brought the community together.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[479] “Road to Promised Land is Rugged for Haitians,” \textit{Chicago Tribune}, September 8, 1993.
\item[480] Ibid.
\item[481] Ibid.
\item[482] Ibid.
\item[484] Carolina G, interview by Author, November 30, 2014.
\end{footnotes}
However, the refugee crisis also highlighted the fractures within Chicago’s Haitian community, particularly along class and generational lines. Chicago’s largely middle class Haitian diaspora had a difficult time differentiating themselves from the highly publicized stereotype of the Haitian boat person-illiterate, diseased, foreign, and overall problematic. As noted in a *Tribune* article: “The prevailing image of Haitians as uneducated immigrants fleeing by the rickety boatload contrasts sharply with the reality of Chicago’s Haitian community, a group with many highly educated professionals and white collar-workers who have blended into the city and suburban neighborhoods.”485 Some Chicago Haitians emphasized that they are not “the boat people.”486 After living in Chicago for several decades, it was alarming for some members of the Haitian community, who desperately sought respectability and affluence, that mainstream society viewed them as poor and uneducated “boat people.” The Chicago press, like the *Tribune*, made it difficult for them to bypass the negative stereotype that defined Haitianess in the city and beyond, and while they rallied to support the newest migrants to the city, the pioneer generation also pushed back against the negative stereotype bestowed upon the entire community by trying to separate themselves from the refugee crisis. This division not only speaks to the difference in waves of immigration but also to the class politics of Haiti. Those who had means to leave during the Duvalier period in contrast to those who left post-Duvalier often replicated the class differentials and tensions from Haiti in the new diaspora in Chicago.

486 Ibid; Oral histories conducted with the pioneer migrants (those who came in the 1960s and early 1970s) often included discussion of the difference between the more affluent migrants and the newer migrants and Haitian refugees who came during the 1980s and 1990s.
One example of the class and generational tension within the changing Chicago Haitian diaspora is the case of André Patrick Augustin, the social worker who welcomed Haitian refugees to Chicago. Augustin was steadily employed, had a talk show, and from the view of the refugees, represented “a Haitian who made it.”⁴⁸⁷ His “expensive clothing and fine gold jewelry” conveyed his class status in direct contrast to many of the refugees who were living three and four to a one-bedroom apartment and barely making ends meet. Similarly, the Tribune contrasted the life of one Haitian refugee in Chicago, who was “wandering the streets of Rogers Park daily, looking for work” versus the life of one of the Haitian pioneers in Chicago, who owned a car dealership and multiple buildings in the city.⁴⁸⁸ Not only were these two men of different social classes, they “represent[ed]…two different era of immigration.”⁴⁸⁹ These class and generational differences would continue to be a critical factor in how the Haitian diaspora in Chicago formed in the late twentieth century.

Even though the refugees sought solace from Haitian politics in Chicago, the political chaos of the homeland found its way to the hostland. In June 1994, exiled Haitian President Aristide spoke at the University of Chicago at the fourth annual Ignacio Martin-Baro conference. Over six hundred Chicagoans attended his speech, entitled “The Political Future of Haiti,” and many of them were likely members of the Haitian community.⁴⁹⁰ Aristide used the speech to remind Chicagoans of the changes he made in Haiti despite his brief tenure in office, including the end of drug trafficking and the beginnings of actual democratic processes. He noted that since his exile, Haiti was again

⁴⁸⁸ Haiti Boat People to be Put in Camps: We’re Not All Boat People, Haitians in Chicago Say,” Chicago Tribune, July 6, 1994.
⁴⁸⁹ Ibid.
being run by “a collection of gangsters, thugs, and hooligans,” and he called on the U.S. government to restore democracy in Haiti.\(^{491}\)

Aristide also had an unpublicized meeting with his Haitian constituents during his Chicago visit. Held late at night at the Talbot Hotel downtown, the Chicago members of the tenth state, including many of the newly settled Haitian refugees, used the opportunity to air their grievances with the exiled president. According to Karen Richman and William Balan-Gaubert, the meeting turned into a free-for-all of Haitians airing grievances with each other and with Aristide.\(^{492}\) “\textit{Le non-dit}-what could not be said-was that in spite of his mass support, the valiant beloved president had been overthrown by a small group of soldiers. Many of us were wondering why the people did not rise up when the coup erupted.”\(^{493}\) The Haitians also “took turns confessing nameless sins and verbally assaulting one another before their exiled president.”\(^{494}\) In response, Aristide blamed Lionel Barberousse, the outgoing Haitian consul in Chicago, for the miscommunications and assured them that order would be restored in the homeland and the hostland.

This was not Aristide’s first time in Chicago; he spoke at the Operation PUSH headquarters and DePaul University in December 1992, a year after his exile from Haiti.\(^{495}\) The locations of his Chicago speeches are not random, and they represent key locales of diaspora formation and intra-racial connection for the Haitian community in Chicago. The University of Chicago and DePaul University highlight the importance of educational institutions to the Chicago diaspora, and the choice of Operation PUSH underscores Jesse Jackson’s growing involvement in Haitian affairs in Chicago. At

\(^{491}\) Ibid.
\(^{492}\) Richman and Balan-Gaubert, 95.
\(^{493}\) Ibid.
\(^{494}\) Ibid.
Operation PUSH, over a thousand Haitians greeted Aristide in French and Creole and were hopeful that the newly elected U.S. President Bill Clinton would restore democracy to Haiti.\footnote{Ibid.} Jackson also encouraged Clinton to send American troops to Haiti to reinstall Aristide.

In September 1994, Clinton took Jackson’s advice and lived up to the hopes of many of the Chicago Haitians when he mandated Aristide’s return to Haiti. Anthropologist Paul Farmer argues that the United States’ move to restore Aristide, called Operation Uphold Democracy, was not about restoring true democracy to Haiti; instead it was a move to restore power to the military and business class in Haiti and to utilize Aristide as another puppet president.\footnote{Paul Farmer, \textit{The Uses of Haiti} (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1994, 2003), 28.} Activist Beverly Bell notes that Aristide’s restoration to power came in large part due to the pressure from the Haitian community on the island and in the diaspora.\footnote{Beverly Bell, \textit{Walking on Fire: Haitian Women’s Stories of Survival and Resistance} (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 15.} However, the move was not popular among all Chicagoans, Haitians and otherwise. Mayor Richard Daley publicly critiqued the move and said the president had failed to make the case to much of the American public that the intervention was necessary.\footnote{“Daley Not Backing Clinton in Invasion,” \textit{The Chicago Tribune}, September 7, 1994.} Daley compared the situation in Haiti to that of Cuba, China, and Somalia and questioned if the United States would intervene in those countries as well. Moreover, Daley saw better use of the budget for the Haitian intervention: “That billion dollars can easily be taken out of Washington…we struggle to get a good (drug) prevention program, we struggle to keep schools open.”\footnote{Ibid.} Daley’s concerns represented the pressing issues of many of Chicago’s neighborhoods, especially
black neighborhoods where many Haitians also lived. In this way, Daley felt that American dollars and assistance should go towards the Haitians in the diaspora and not those in Haiti.

Daley’s critique also aligned with some of the Haitians in Chicago who felt Aristide was another failed Haitian president. Pascal L. described Aristide as a continuation of Duvalierism overall.\textsuperscript{501} Aristide’s tenure only lasted about a year because his original five-year tenure was not extended despite his exile for most of his presidency, and scholars note Aristide’s return to the presidency represented a “crisis of governance” defined by a corrupt government, much opposition, and an international embargo.\textsuperscript{502} It seems those critical of Aristide were not wrong.

The historic election of Jean Bertrand Aristide shaped the Haitian diaspora in Chicago in multiple ways. Aristide’s short-lived stint as president simultaneously opened and closed the possibility of return to Haiti for those in the diaspora. The Haitian refugee crisis accelerated after Aristide’s exile, and a small percentage of the refugees were resettled in Chicago, which helped to expand the community in number, visibility, class, and generation. Chicago Haitians both embraced and turned away from the refugee crisis, which highlights how the class fissures of the homeland can replicate in the diaspora. The refugees themselves had a difficult time making the transition to life in Chicago, especially since the traded in one set of dangers for another. Finally, Aristide recognized the importance of the Haitian community in Chicago as an extension of the tenth state and spoke in the city three times between 1992 and 1994, before he was returned to the

\textsuperscript{501} Pascal L., interview by Author, June 6, 2015.
\textsuperscript{502} Dupuy, 160.
island. Thus, the late 1980s and early 1990s set the tone for the shifts in the Haitian diaspora in Chicago that would take place over the next several decades.

The Tenth State in Action: CHAI and Haitian Diasporic Organizing in Chicago

Once the opportunity for repatriation to Haiti closed for Haitians in the diaspora in the early 1990s, many looked to find ways to establish themselves more concretely in the hostland. One way Haitians established themselves was by becoming politically and civically engaged, and they did this by creating various professional and philanthropic organizations. In his study on Haitians in New York, political scientist François Pierre-Louis argues that the diaspora became more connected to American politics nationally and locally while also keeping an eye out on Haitian sociopolitical and economic developments during the later years of the twentieth century. Pierre-Louis asserts that this political incorporation did not equate with assimilation; that instead Haitian-American leaders created these organizations to focus on the “mainstream body politic” and provide a transnational space for them to address issues in the home and hostlands. Chicago Haitians also utilized these organizations, and many sprung up over the city during the 1990s and 2000s. This chapter focuses on one such organization, the Concerned Haitian Americans of Illinois (CHAI), one of the oldest and longest lasting groups in Chicago. An investigation of CHAI’s archives highlights how Haitians used these groups to create diaspora at this critical transitionary moment.

CHAI was founded in 1991, shortly after the coup that ousted Aristide from power and the political turmoil which followed. However, according to the organization’s founding constitution and by-laws, CHAI proclaimed itself a “non-profit, non-political

504 Ibid, 54, 66.
organization" founded “to assist a number of under-privileged children.” The group aimed to provide children in rural Northern Haiti with education, nutrition, health care, and clothing. These initiatives, despite being labeled as “non-political” addressed the consequences of the fraught sociopolitical climate in Haiti. The group would grapple with its apolitical stance as it continued to grow and the politics of Haiti continued to have direct impact on the organization’s agenda, group dynamics, and their personal lives. Moreover, the group’s founding members were representative of the pioneer generation of this diaspora: they had lived across the Chicagoland area for at least a decade and were middle-class individuals who had the means to help those less fortunate on the island.

From the very beginning, women played an active role in CHAI, underscoring black women’s continued importance in Haitian diasporic community building in Chicago. The inaugural leadership of CHAI included a male president (Jean D.) and three female executive officers (Maria M., Antoinette B., and Colleen L.), and eleven of the eighteen original members were women. The presence of these Haitian women shows the initiative that they took during this moment of acceptance to make sure their voices were heard with these organizations and across the diaspora.

CHAI hit the ground running with its four-pronged agenda, and within its first year, the group found ways to promote the education of Haitian children. At their April 1992 meeting, the group explored sharing a school facility with an American nun working in Haiti. Sister Martin offered to work with CHAI, but the idea of sharing a facility generated “mixed responses” among the members. “What flexibility would we have? Would we have total control over projects? What and whose guidelines would we

506 Names were anonymized for privacy purposes.
These valid concerns represented the autonomy and democratic discussion that Chicago Haitians seemingly craved on the homeland and therefore mandated within their organization. The members eventually agreed to use the school and committed to sponsoring thirty children’s education for three years, for a total of $6000 annually.

Fundraising characterized a critical component of CHAI’s work, and they engaged the wider Chicago and Illinois community to reach their financial goals. Even though the executive officers and initial membership consisted solely of Haitian people and the organization proclaimed itself Haitian by name, the group opened itself to members of any ethnic background as long as they “work[ed] and liv[ed] in Illinois” and “support[ed] the mission and philosophy of the organization.” This decision suggests that Haitians in Illinois began to see themselves as permanent part of their hostland community and that their fellow Illinoisans could help provide support for the homeland.

In 1992, they held their first Christmas party fundraiser, which would become an annual tradition for the organization. This annual fundraiser not only subsidized the annual donations members were required to make, it also served as time for the members to bring their families together and experience the social aspects of diaspora making: music, food, and comradery. At the first Christmas party held on December 19, 1992, the group had a quick meeting to discuss their progress thus far, shared a card from famed Haitian musician, Ti Manno, collected over $1600, and ended the night with a party which lasted until the early hours of December 20, 1992. This small event grew within a few years, and by 1995, the group invited the mayors of Chicago and Rockford and the

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507 CHAI Meeting Minutes, April 18, 1992, CHAI Papers.  
508 CHAI Meeting Minutes, December 19, 1992, CHAI Papers.
governor of Illinois to their event. CHAI members also decided to sing both the American and Haitian national anthems at the Christmas party, with the American anthem sung first. They made sure to have copies of both anthems printed on each table and displayed both American and Haitian flags at the event. Again, these gestures symbolize the dual identity that the Haitians in Chicago understood during this period; they were Haitian and American and used their Christmas party to showcase this dual consciousness.

CHAI established itself as an organization over the next several years, shown by their use of an official organizational symbol, logo, and letterhead in 1993 and a growing membership, 36 members by April 1995. Moreover, the group planned medical mission trips to Haiti in order to advance the healthcare tenant of their mission. The initial discussions of these trips began in October 1993, when the standing president, Dubois, suggested the idea at the group’s meeting. As a doctor, he took charge on this matter, and the group found a local Chicago pharmaceutical company to donate medications for the trip. It is unclear whether the first medical mission trip occurred in 1993, but a week-long trip took place in November 1995. Interestingly, the doctors in Cap-Haïtien were not initially enthused by the idea of a medical clinic which suggests possible tension between the diaspora and those who stayed on the homeland. However, the trip went on and eight CHAI members worked with two Haitian doctors while there. They saw over two hundred patients, but the facility used (the personal home

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509 CHAI Meeting Minutes, November 25, 1995, CHAI Papers.
510 CHAI Meeting Minutes, April 1, 1995, CHAI Papers.
511 CHAI, October 16, 1993, CHAI Papers.
512 CHAI Meeting Minutes, August 27, 1995, CHAI Papers.
of one of the Haitian doctors) was deemed inadequate.\textsuperscript{513} Moreover, the unrest in Haiti meant that the clinic could only be held for one day.\textsuperscript{514} This detail led members to note the importance of flexibility and creativity in achieving their mission in Haiti and also highlights the continued impact of the tense sociopolitical climate in Haiti on CHAI and its members. Despite these issues, this mission trip should be seen as a success, with two hundred patients treated in one day, and it laid the foundation for annual mission trips.

CHAI’s last two initiatives revolved around donating basic items—nutritional food and clothing—to the people of Haiti and the refugees who were living in Chicago, which represented how CHAI’s mission included the newest members of the diaspora. Over the next several years, the group sent clothing, sewing supplies, linens, and bedding to Haiti totaling a value of over one million dollars.\textsuperscript{515} CHAI relied on the Holy Cross Sisters to distribute these donations to Haitians which indicates the importance of having a trustworthy connection in Haiti in order to make sure donations get to those who need it most. The members of CHAI were aware to the corruption in Haiti, addressing how to bypass the problem of Haitians who only wanted to “line their own pockets” and the reality that they would need to pay (“grease the palms) of some contacts in order to get their mission accomplished.\textsuperscript{516} In terms of nutrition, records show that a container was sent to Haiti containing food in August 1997, and they were likely nonperishable items. Moreover, cooking classes were added to their school’s curriculum in 1997, with a chef added to the instructional staff.\textsuperscript{517} These endeavors represent diaspora in action and how

\textsuperscript{513} CHAI Meeting Minutes, November 25, 1995, CHAI Papers.
\textsuperscript{514} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{515} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{516} CHAI Meeting Minutes, November 25, 1995, CHAI Papers.
\textsuperscript{517} CHAI Meeting Minutes, November 25, 1995, CHAI Papers.
organizations served as vehicles for those in the diaspora to continue to have an impact on the home they left behind.

At the same time, organizing within a diaspora is not always easy, and the tensions within the homeland sometimes transferred to the diasporic community. The CHAI archive reveals tension around issues of politics, class, and personality. CHAI’s stance of being a non-political organization suggests that there were varying political factions among its members: some were Aristide supporters, while some vehemently opposed him. Some members felt that the United States should step in to help Haiti while others felt international intervention was Haiti’s core problem. Like elsewhere, the Aristide coup divided many Haitians in Chicago, and in order for them to maintain the organization and meet its goals, it was important for them to keep these differences at bay. At a 1992 meeting, the group recognized these political differences and decided it would be best to “leave [individual opinions] outside meeting time.”518

Yet, these differences still found their way into CHAI affairs, as shown in an emergency meeting held on October 6, 1996. The meeting minutes suggest that the previous month’s meeting included debate around the impending organizational elections, but some issues were left unresolved.519 An emergency meeting was necessary to “discuss the state of the association” and to decide whether the organization should “dissolve or not.”520 Again, this shows similarities between the homeland and hostland; namely how elections can lead to discord and disagreement. Ultimately, the group decided to keep the organization alive, based on a specific set of standards:

1) Respect to all members whoever they might be.

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518 CHAI Meeting Minutes, March 21, 1992, CHAI Papers.
519 CHAI Meeting Minutes, September 21, 1996, CHAI Papers.
520 CHAI Meeting Minutes, October 6, 1996, CHAI Papers.
2) All members should be treated equally.
3) Recognize what all members are investing in CHAI based on their ability and capability.
4) Remember that not all members are good at or can do everything. Each member had different talent the organization can profit from.
5) Delicate matters should not be discussed when guests are present.521

These standards for organizing exemplify how those in the diaspora attempt to grapple with/solve long-standing conflicts rooted in the homeland. The need for respect, equality, understanding, and condemnation stand out and echo complaints in Haiti about the issues which kept democracy from flourishing there. Class differentials also seemed to be a source of tension as suggested by the third standard; despite being a mostly middle-class diaspora, there was still some variance in socioeconomics within the membership of the organization and Haitian diasporic community in Chicago. Even with these standards agreed upon, one member still decided to leave CHAI, due to a personal “lack of intolerance for impoliteness and arrogance.”522 Indeed, sometimes the conflicts were too great to overcome.

The tensions continued to test the diasporic ties in CHAI, and during a 1998 meeting, members echoed the need for respect and tolerance among them. One member argued that there was “malaise in the group,” while others suggested that there was intolerance for varying opinion within the organization.523 While one member argued that these issues stemmed from an overall “attitude problem,” another suggested that these issues originated from the differing goals various members had at the inception of the organization.524 While these discussions, which seemed to stem from personality clashes, may have been taxing on the membership, they were necessary for the organization to

521 Ibid.
522 Ibid.
524 Ibid.
continue forward. Future meetings included similar discussions, when members were
implored to respect one another’s differing opinions, and officers tasked members to be
tolerant with one another for the good of the group. Diaspora-making is not a linear or
seamless process, and those within CHAI modeled the emotional labor required to keep
the diaspora together.

Despite its internal issues, CHAI expanded during the late 1990s and 2000s. Its
growth was marked by new members, the growing size of its biggest fundraiser (the
annual Christmas party), the addition of a second annual fundraiser (the summer picnic),
and the construction of a CHAI school in Haiti. CHAI’s membership sustained during
this period with about 40-50 members with about half regularly attending monthly
meetings, and the addition of new members strengthened the organization. For instance, a
Haitian pharmacist joined the organization in 1996 and offered to use her pharmacy as a
place to solicit donations for CHAI. The Christmas party transitioned from a small to a
large-scale event held. Bands from Haiti, New York, and Florida were tapped as
entertainment for the event as well as Haitian DJ’s, showing the connections across the
diaspora. Moreover, Haitian art and rum were advertised as the raffle prizes while the
Haitian and American national anthems were still sung at the start of each event. The
1996 Christmas party brought in $6000 in profit alone and was deemed a huge success
for the relatively small organization.

Because of its growing initiatives, CHAI developed a second annual fundraiser,
the summer picnic, in 1995. Like the Christmas party, the main goal of the event was to
raise money for CHAI’s philanthropy in Haiti, but it was also an opportunity for the

525 CHAI Meeting Minutes, June 16, 1996, CHAI Papers.
526 CHAI Meeting Minutes, January 18, 1996, CHAI Papers.
diaspora to come together and celebrate the dual nature of their identity as Haitians and Americans. This can be seen in the cuisine choice for the picnic: both Haitian food (rice and beans, *griot*) and American food (hot dogs and corn on the cob) were served.527 The flyer distributed to advertise the 1996 picnic read “Come enjoy the taste, art, and sound of the Caribbean,” highlighting that the event would include more than Haitian guests; indeed the flyer was circulated in Chicago and Rockford, Illinois newspapers, radio, tv, and churches.528

Much of the money CHAI raised in the late 1990s and early 2000s went towards the construction of an independent school in Haiti. After several years of sharing a school facility, the group decided to move forward with the ambitious project of constructing their own school in Haiti. Between 1997 and 2000, the organization focused its fundraising efforts on building the school, even adding an informal Super Bowl fundraiser to its repertoire to bring in more revenue. The school opened in 2000 in Cap-Haïtien, Haiti and advanced a central tenant of CHAI’s mission: to provide education to children in Haiti. This would be the first of two school CHAI constructed in Haiti, and the organization also built a medical clinic in Cap-Haïtien in 2004.

CHAI’s tenure exemplifies how Chicago Haitians used organizations to create diaspora when they realized going back to Haiti was no longer a formidable option. Despite the tensions that arose within CHAI based on political affiliation, class differentials, and personality clashes, they worked through these conflicts to build themselves up in their new home while making strides to help those left behind. In this

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527 CHAI Meeting Minutes, May 25, 1995 CHAI Papers.
528 CHAI Meeting Minutes, March 24, 1996, CHAI Papers.
way, it is important to recognize how these organizations served as spaces of connection for a diaspora disconnected by space, generation, politics, and class.

**DuSable Recognized: New Commemoration Efforts in the Windy City**

While they formed organizations to aid their homeland and to remain connected to each other, Chicago Haitians also worked with African Americans and others to advance black political empowerment in the city. The historic mayoral election of Harold Washington in 1983 gave momentum to local black freedom struggles including the fight to have DuSable widely recognized as the founder of Chicago, and black women remained at the helm of this movement. Washington, a Chicago native and DuSable High School graduate, represented another anomaly in Chicago’s history: a black man who beat the odds and took a leadership role in Chicago. While in office, Washington commemorated DuSable’s legacy and inspired others to further memorialize the black pioneer. Even after Washington’s untimely death, black Chicagoans of American and Haitian descent continued the fight to commemorate DuSable in the city he founded.

Harold Washington’s election was the endpoint of years of local African American protest in Chicago, according to historian Jeffrey Helgeson. Often excluded from the Democratic machine that ruled Chicago politics during the twentieth century, black Chicagoans “ultimately played a key role in the toppling the infamous machine.”

Washington’s victory over incumbent Jane Byrne and legacy Richard M. Daley signified the end of the machine politics in Chicago despite being a product of the Democratic

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machine in many ways. Black activists in Chicago mobilized around the 1983 election in order to get a black candidate to the top, and Haitian women were part of this interracial coalition that also included Latinos, Asians, and whites. According to one oral history respondent, she got involved in the Washington election as a way to find her political voice in America. Washington won the primary and the general election with small margins, making him the first black mayor in the city that had been a hub for black life since the early twentieth century. While black life did not change substantially under Washington, the symbolism of his victory reverberated around the city much like the DuSable myth.

Washington likely understood his victory as part of the narrative of black life in Chicago which began with DuSable. After his reelection in 1987, he served as the keynote speaker for an event which celebrated DuSable’s appearance on an official US postage stamp. Part of the Black Heritage series, DuSable’s stamp was the tenth stamp issued in the series honoring Black History Month. The Daley Center held the event to celebrate the stamp. Washington called DuSable’s stamp “a celebration [of] the history of our great city,” and he acknowledged the work of black women in the 1920s and 1930s to commemorate DuSable’s contributions to the city. The DuSable High School band and choir also performed at this event, a nod to their namesake, to the black women who fought to get the high school renamed in the 1930s, and to Washington who was a DuSable High School alum. Moreover, the members of Chicago’s Ben Franklin Stamp

530 Bennett, xxi. Washington’s father, Roy, was a Third Ward precinct captain for many years and ran for city council in 1947. Washington also ran as a Democrat, so his election served as a shift in Chicago Democratic politics in terms of race more than substance.
Club were asked to draw pictures depicting what DuSable may have looked like, since there were no pictures of him in the archive.\footnote{Les Winick, “First Day Fete Set in Chicago,” \textit{The Chicago Tribune}, February 15, 1987.} Tasking Chicagoans with drawing portraits of DuSable empowered them to remember the pioneer in their own imaginaries and highlights how Chicagoans individually and collectively took ownership of his legacy over time.

Later that year, Washington dedicated a large piece of land in the city for a park to be built in DuSable’s honor. The three-acre parcel of land, located east of North Lake Shore Drive and south of Navy Pier, where the Chicago River meets Lake Michigan, seemed like the appropriate location to build a park to commemorate the life of DuSable who utilized the land and waterways of Chicago to build a thriving business and community. However, after Washington died in November 1987, the fight to develop the park was left to black Chicagoans of American and Haitian origin. Over the course of the 1990s and 2000s, the land for the park passed through the hands of various development companies who made tentative plans to build the park, but to no avail. In July 2000, the Chicago Park District announced that it would lease the park land to Arnes Petrakis’ development company, and they planned to temporarily turn the land into a parking lot which they would lease to help fund the eventual construction of the park.\footnote{“Three Acres of the Lake: DuSable Park Proposal Project,” http://www.saic.edu/~lpalmer/time.htm} These plans were met with much critique from organizations like the Friends of the DuSable Park and the DuSable League, an organization formed by black women in the likeness of Annie Oliver’s National DuSable Memorial Society, which halted the plans for the parking lot. However, this victory was short lived, and radioactive materials were discovered on the
park land in December 2000, which made the land undevelopable until it had been cleaned.\textsuperscript{536}

In April 2003, the Chicago Park District named a fifteen-member committee to head the DuSable Park Coalition (DPC) to get the park developed. The DPC included representatives from the Art Institute, the DuSable League, the Friends of DuSable, and the DuSable Heritage Association (DHA), an organization formed in 2002 by Chicago Haitians. According to one of DHA’s founders, Sebastian L., a Jamaican friend alerted him to the Chicago Park District naming the DuSable Harbor which prompted him to attend a Park District meeting.\textsuperscript{537} After this initial meeting, he was inspired to form DHA with other Chicago Haitians to make sure that the Haitian voice was included in the park development. Together, the DPC envisioned the Park as a way to “represent Chicago’s culturally and ethnically diverse heritage…[and a way to] promote connections to our history and access to our waterways.”\textsuperscript{538} This multicultural vision of the Park represented a reckoning of DuSable’s legacy within the city, despite the continuous discrepancies surrounding the details of his life. For DHA and other members of the DPC, there were no questions about DuSable’s Haitian heritage, and this fact would be immortalized in the park as a way to silence the debate.\textsuperscript{539} Even with this coalition in place, the fight to get the Park built continues.

Even though the construction of DuSable Park stalled, other DuSable initiatives grew during the late twentieth and early twenty-first century because of black women’s activism in the city. The DuSable Museum expanded into a larger space in the late 1980s

\textsuperscript{536} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{537} Sebastian L., interview by Author, February 17, 2015.
\textsuperscript{538} Eleanor Roemer, “Park will give DuSable due recognition,” \textit{Chicago Tribune}, May 9, 2003.
due in large part to the leadership of President Amina Dickerson and Director of Special Events and Public Affairs Doris Franklin. Margaret Burroughs, the founder of the DuSable Museum, stayed on board as president emeritus, and she passed the torch to a new generation of black women like Dickerson and Franklin, who would grow the museum in her legacy and in DuSable’s. Franklin took the initiative in keeping the museum relevant within the Chicago community by increasing the media campaign and creating new events. These new events included a fundraising walkathon which toured important sites in Chicago’s black history, including the site of DuSable’s home. Franklin also created a Carnaval Ball, a fundraising event that included “educational programs and workshops on mask making, costumes and dance” which would “expose Chicagoans to some of the traditions and customs of blacks in others parts of the world as well as in the United States.” The Carnaval Ball served as a diasporic space which connected Chicagoans, especially those of African descent, to other blacks across the diaspora, including those in Haiti who had their own carnival season. Even the language Franklin used to describe the event denotes it as a space of diasporic exchange: “Carnaval is a state of mind…through the music, the dance, the food, the gaiety, there is a transformation.” The connectivity to other black peoples at Carnaval, through dancing, drinking, music, and fashion, highlights the continued importance of the DuSable Museum and its events as a space that lived up to the diasporic legacy of its namesake.

Other black Chicagoans fought to have DuSable’s legacy recognized in the city. In September 1987, south side Aldermen Robert Shaw and Allan Streeter introduced a

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541 Ibid.
542 Ibid.
bill to change the seal of Chicago to a bust of DuSable. Chicago’s official seal, adopted in 1837, featured a ship on Lake Michigan. According to Ninth Ward alderman Shaw, the ship commemorated slavery and racism and that putting DuSable on the seal would better represent the people of Chicago. “I would be in favor of placing a bust of DuSable on the seal because he is the first Chicago citizen, the first Chicago businessman…And had it not been for him, Chicago might not even exist.”\footnote{“Chicago seal racist?” \textit{Baltimore Afro-American}, September 12, 1987.} Similarly, the DuSable League advocated for the inclusion of the DuSable memorial in the landmark designation of the Michigan Avenue Bridge. Virginia Julian, the research director of the DuSable League, argued that while there was growing recognition around DuSable in the city, there was still a large silence shrouding his legacy. “Julian, who said she has lectured in Dublin, Ireland, Montreal, and Springfield, on DuSable’s settlement, charged that in Chicago there has been “an unwritten mandate to keep the lid on DuSable.”\footnote{Devall, Cheryl, “Michigan Avenue Bridge nearing landmark status,” \textit{Chicago Tribune}, April 7, 1988.} Despite the strides made towards widespread recognition of DuSable in Chicago, there was still a great deal of work to be done, and black men and women took the helm of getting this work done.

There were many strides in the efforts to get Jean Baptiste Point DuSable official recognition in Chicago between 1986-2009. Harold Washington, the first black mayor of Chicago, aided in this effort by dedicating a park to DuSable and after his death, black people took the lead in getting the park built. Chicago Haitians joined these coalitions, evidenced by the work of DHA. The DuSable Museum expanded its initiatives during this time and served as space for diasporic exchange, a reflection of DuSable’s life. Black women like Doris Franklin and Virginia Julian continued the work of Annie Oliver in making sure DuSable got his just due. Their hard work culminated in the official state
and city recognition of DuSable as Chicago’s founder in October 2009. With Haitian flags waving at the celebratory event for this declaration, it signaled the recognition of Chicago as a diasporic space for Haitians and other people of African descent.  

The Newest Leaders of the Diaspora: Haitian Americans in Chicago

In the 2001 text, *Legacies: The Story of the Immigrant Second Generation*, Alejandro Portes and Rubén Rumbaut argue that the children of newcomers who arrived in the United States since 1965 were “the most consequential and lasting legacy of the new mass immigration to the United States.” The children of the mostly black and brown migrants who came to the United States in the latter half of the twentieth century remade the racial and ethnic fabric of the country, and the second generation Haitians living in Chicago are a critical part of this group. The American born children of Haitian immigrant(s) embodied the dual identity of diasporic life; being both Haitian and American, they lived in the gray area of their hyphenated identity. Alongside the 1.5 generation, the second-generation Haitians of the Chicago diaspora played an integral role in cementing the Haitian presence within the city.

Their journey of identity formation was not always easy or linear, and their struggles exemplify what it means for black second generation people to become American. Sociologist Tekle Woldemikael argues that second generation of Haitians assimilated into African American society, an identity imposed on them by American institutions despite cultural and linguistic differences. By becoming African American, they became American. However, Woldemikael does not take into account that African

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American culture is not fixed or timeless; second generation Haitians in Chicago helped shape and reshape what it meant to be black in the city. They did this by blending their parents’ culture with their everyday lived experiences. Further, their success assimilating into Chicago’s (black) community, seen through their educational, cultural, occupational, and political endeavors, helped their parents acculturate into their American life. In this way, they represent the newest leaders of the Chicago diaspora.

Jean Beauvoir, a Haitian-American musician, is one example of the second generation successfully navigating the matriculation process. The son of Haitian and French immigrants, Beauvoir was born in Chicago in 1962, making him a product of the era when the Haitian community in the city grew significantly. Although he was raised in New York City, his experience echoes many of the same themes of the second-generation Haitians reared in Chicago. He described his parents as “pretty strict,” and noted that they threw him out of the house at the age of fourteen after he decided he wanted to be a musician. Instead of following the path of being a doctor, lawyer, or other recognized profession, Beauvoir challenged his parents’ cultural expectations and followed his passion instead. This not only highlights the middle-class make-up of the Chicago diaspora, it also represents the generational tensions surrounding the new ways second generation Haitians chose to live their lives, despite their parents’ discomfort and dismay. Beauvoir’s musical aspirations were not a pipe dream, and he garnered fame and success with several albums and songs, including “Feel the Heat” the single featured in “Cobra,” the 1986 film starring Sylvester Stallone. Beauvoir subverted his parents’ version of the American dream and made it his own. However, he did not turn away from his home

culture, eventually starting a band called Voudou X. This highlights the trajectory of
many second-generation Haitians acculturation process: a turn away from the Haitian,
home culture in favor for popular American culture followed by the eventual return home
and acceptance of their Haitian cultural identity.

Marjorie Vincent is another example of a Haitian American from Chicago who
balanced the dual nature of her identity and achieved national success. The daughter of
Haitian immigrants, Vincent was raised in the Oak Park, a Chicago suburb, and in 1990,
she was crowned Miss America. Her parents each worked two service sector jobs to
support Vincent and her three siblings, especially pushing their children towards
educational achievement. Vincent quoted her father as always saying: “Without an
education, there’s not much you can accomplish.” This highlights a central tenant for
many immigrant parents, the focus on educational attainment, and this value especially
held true for those living in Chicago since the vast educational opportunities had brought
many Haitians to the city since the early twentieth century. Vincent lived up to these
expectations, graduating from DePaul University in 1988 with a degree in music and then
went on to law school at Duke University.

It seems she followed her own American dreams by pursuing success in the
pageant world, and her Haitian American identity played a crucial role in her victory. She
shared her ability to speak French, Haitian Creole, and English with the judges which
highlighted the various parts of her heritage. She also “fascinated the pageant’s celebrity
panel…in the interview portion of the contest” with her awareness of current events

Magazine, October 1, 1990.
552 Ibid.
which suggests that she could speak to national and international events. Vincent's worldly awareness propelled her to become the second black woman to win the contest, and she credited her parents with “teaching her that discipline and perseverance pay off.” Like many other second-generation Haitians, she used what she was taught at home and brought that into their life outside the home, bridging the gap between the two.

Following the pageant, Vincent continued to be a leader of the Chicago Haitian diaspora in the wider public. The Atlanta Daily World interviewed Vincent and her mother, and the two women shared a Caribbean recipe with readers. Vincent’s mother, Florence, described her migration story in the article: she and her husband moved to the U.S. in 1963, three months after their wedding when she was only twenty-one years old. After the two settled into the Oak Park area, Florence worked as a seamstress and caterer, the latter she made her longtime profession. She infused Haitian spices into her cooking, and the Caribbean squash pie the Vincent women shared with the newspaper was a nod to the traditional Haitian squash soup, made on January 1 to commemorate Haitian Independence Day. Vincent not only represented the success and leadership role of second generation Haitians in Chicago and beyond, but she stood in the long line of black women in Chicago who used pageantry as a space for diaspora building. Her story highlights the critical role of black women in the making of diaspora, even in the second generation.

Haitians, both of the 1.5 and second generations, also established themselves within the diaspora in Chicago by becoming politically engaged. Lionel Jean-Baptiste, a

553 Ibid.
554 Ibid.
556 Ibid.
member of the 1.5 generation, is one example of a Chicago Haitian who established himself in the new homeland through political office. Born in Haiti in 1949, Jean-Baptiste migrated to Chicago in 1964 as a teen to rejoin his mother who had already been in Chicago. While he grew up within the growing Haitian community, he described being influenced by and involved in local African American community organizing, including fair housing initiatives in Evanston. He left the Midwest to attend Princeton University and did his thesis on transforming the Haitian peasantry into a revolutionary force for change. After graduating in 1974, Jean-Baptiste lived in Brooklyn for a decade, and he found a second home in the vibrant Haitian diaspora there. In the 1980s, he returned to Chicago and attended Kent University for his law degree. He worked as an attorney in Chicago, focusing on immigration, personal injury, domestic relations, and real estate law. Jean-Baptiste also continued his social and political engagement in Chicago over the 1990s, supporting youth initiatives, the NAACP, and Haitian organizations, including the Haitian American Community Center (HACA) which had been active since the 1970s.

In 2001, Lionel Jean Baptiste was elected as second ward alderman of Evanston, with an 85% popular vote, making him the first Haitian American to hold political office in the Chicagoland area. His historic election garnered both financial and political

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557 Lionel B., interview by Author, June 22, 2016.
558 Ibid.
559 Ibid.
560 Ibid.
561 Ibid.
562 Marjorie Valburn, “Haitian-American Politics in Chicago,” aliciapatterson.org, May 4, 2011. This post originates from the Alicia Patterson Foundation blog; the Alicia Patterson Foundation was established in 1965 to commemorate Alicia Patterson, editor and publisher of Newsday. Grants are awarded to working journalists to pursue independent projects of significant interest and to write articles based on their investigations for The APF Reporter, a web published magazine by the Foundation and available on the web.
support from the Haitian community as well as Evanstonians across race and ethnic background. Baptiste saw his election as an important moment in the development of the Haitian diaspora in Chicago: “Wasn’t it time for us to step into the mainstream of American life and come out of the invisibility?”563 Unlike the larger diasporas in New York and Miami that boasted several Haitian-American political officials, Baptiste’s victory was the first foray for Chicagoans to engage in the larger city and state politics. Despite having a long history in the city, it seemed that the turn of the century represented a watershed moment when Chicago Haitians were ready to “transcend…nationalistic and ethnic boundaries” and accept Chicago as their new homeland.564 They mobilized around a 1.5 generation representative and found power in their new environment with Baptiste’s victory.

Baptiste’s victory provided momentum for the Haitian diaspora to gain further political representation in Chicago. In 2004, Kwame Raoul, a second-generation Haitian-American and Chicagoan, was appointed to the Illinois Senate, replacing Barack Obama. Raoul’s parents migrated to Chicago in the 1950s, and he was born in 1964 on the south side of the city.565 Raoul’s father was a doctor, which speaks to the educated and professional nature of much of the Chicago diaspora, and he followed in his father’s footsteps by pursuing a professional career in law. It seems Raoul’s parents pushed the importance of education much like Marjorie Vincent’s. He graduated from DePaul

563 Ibid.
564 Ibid.
University and Chicago Kent Law School, like Baptiste, and he worked as a Cook County prosecutor and senior attorney for the City Colleges of Chicago.⁵⁶⁶

Raoul’s campaign also mobilized the Haitian community in Chicago, and they held fundraisers for his campaign which included traditional Haitian cuisine.⁵⁶⁷ Furthermore, Raoul’s election represented a watershed moment for the Haitian diaspora in Chicago, deemed a “sign of maturity for our community...[with] the second and third generations fully immersed in the process,” as reported by Harry Fouché.⁵⁶⁸ This quote demonstrates the important role of the second-generation, like Raoul, in cementing the Haitian diaspora into the Chicago landscape. These victories did not mean that they turned away from Haiti, however; as Pierre-Louis argues, “their evolution as Haitian Americans has taught them that the best way to really help Haiti is by having political power in the US at all levels of government.”⁵⁶⁹ By establishing themselves in Chicago, they could better help Haiti and attempt to balance the dual nature of their identity.

The maturation of the 1.5 and second-generation Haitian Americans into leaders for the rest of the diaspora was not a simple or painless process. Generational tensions, intra-racial misunderstandings, and assimilating into American culture complicated how Haitian Americans saw themselves and their Chicago surroundings. For those in the 1.5 generation, having an accent made this process even more difficult, and Catherine D. described how her sister worked to hide her accent and learn popular black vernacular in order to fit in.⁵⁷⁰ Her sister, Fabienne, elaborated on this experience, explaining that she was teased and bullied for having an accent, even by African American classmates. This

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⁵⁶⁶ Ibid.
⁵⁶⁸ Avila, 2.
⁵⁶⁹ Pierre-Louis, 69.
⁵⁷⁰ Catherine D., interview by Author, June 21, 2016.
made her want to try to “Americanize quickly,” and she started shopping for the latest fashion and joined extracurricular activities to assimilate with her peer group.\textsuperscript{571} For some of the 1.5 generation, this language barrier meant that they held back a grade once they got to the US. Others learned English in dual language programs, which existed at schools across the city, including Kozminski Elementary in the Hyde Park neighborhood and Paul Revere Elementary on the south side. Even for second generation Haitians who were born in Chicago, language was an issue. Haitian Creole was often their first language and the one primarily spoke in the home, so they too had to learn English quickly in order to Americanize and fit in with peers.

However, parental and cultural expectations sometimes made the Americanization process difficult, and many of the Haitian Americans respondents discussed how their parents’ strict expectations clashed with what their American friends were doing. For instance, when friends would invite a Haitian American to a sleepover, they knew that would be met with a no from their parents. While some American friends had late curfews or could go where they pleased, Haitian Americans had to be home at a certain time and had to check in with their parents often. For Haitian Americans in Chicago, especially, the expectation of going to college was not a matter of choice as it was for some of their peers. These discrepancies not only made the peer matriculation more difficult, they also showed the extra responsibility placed on Haitian Americans to live up to their immigrant parents’ cultural expectations despite now having a reference point from their cultural homeland.

It seems Haitian American men navigated this process a little better than their female counterparts, highlighting how gender expectations from Haiti translated into the

\textsuperscript{571} Fabienne D. interview by Author, June 30, 2016.
diaspora. Hamilton J. and Remy A. relayed having a relatively easy time assimilating into American life and culture, while many of the female respondents discussed the difficulties of trying to maintain being a “good Haitian girl” while trying to experience the freedom being America afforded them as young women.572 For instance, Lacey D. described feeling cultural pressure to go to a college close to home.573 Dating for Haitian American women proved more difficult as well, since cultural norms of Haitian courting did not mix well with American norms. Mae Y., part of the 1.5 generation, described how she never went to any of her high school dances because dating was often restricted to the girl’s home in Haitian culture.574 According to anthropologist and poet Gina Athena Ulysse, the patriarchal protection of Haitian parents served as a way to protect their investments in their children as social capital, but this protection often clashed with the self-definition of young Haitian women inspired by black feminism.575 This clash can be seen in how Mae felt that she had to sneak out behind her mother’s back in order to experience American culture and dating.576 These nuances shaped the heterogeneous Haitian American experience.

The 1.5 and second generation Haitian Americans in Chicago were pioneers and leaders to the diaspora there because they helped establish the growing community during the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. Through musical, pageantry, political, and educational mediums, these Haitian Americans used what they learned at home to navigate and often times succeed, in the outside American world. Tensions based on

573 Lacey D., interview by Author, September 2, 2016.
574 Mae Y., interview by Author, Chicago, IL, September 27, 2016.
576 Mae Y., interview by Author, September 27, 2016
cultural expectations and racial misunderstandings presented obstacles for this group to overcome, but they rose to the challenge and helped bring the Chicago diaspora into mainstream visibility within the city and beyond.

Conclusion

The era between 1986 and 2009 marked a moment of acceptance for Chicago Haitians. After Jean Claude Duvalier was expelled from Haiti in February 1986, Haitians both on and off the island wondered what would come next. They got their answer in 1990 with the election of Jean Bertrand Aristide, the first democratically elected president in Haitian history. Aristide announced that those in the diaspora would be the tenth state of Haiti, bringing the diaspora closer to home than many had been for decades. However, Aristide’s presidency ended before it really started, and Chicago Haitians had to accept the Midwestern Metropolis as their permanent home.

They coped with this moment of acceptance in various ways. Many continued to migrate to Chicago, which helped the diaspora to grow and acculturate in the city. They formed organizations to stay connected with each other since they were not centralized to one locale within the city. These organizations also allowed them to stay connected to the homeland as well. Chicago Haitians also became more involved in Chicago politics, including the election of Harold Washington and the fight to commemorate DuSable in the city. Finally, 1.5 and second generation Haitians in Chicago became the leaders of the diaspora; by matriculating into Chicago schools, politics, and culture, they helped the Chicago diaspora establish itself further in the new homeland. Generational and gender tensions complicated this process. This acceptance of a new homeland would prove
critical in 2010, when the diaspora had to rally together during one of the worst tragedies seen in Haiti and beyond.
Conclusion

Rebuilding After Rupture:
The 2010 Haitian Earthquake and the Future of the Chicago Diaspora

“Oh my God. Aren’t you Haitian?”

It was January 12, 2010, and I was at work when my co-teacher alerted me to something she heard on the radio. There had just been an earthquake in Léogâne, Haiti, about twenty miles west of Port-au-Prince, and early reports did not look good. “Oh my God. Aren’t you Haitian? Did you hear about this yet?” I immediately called my mom to see what she knew, and she had just received a harrowing call from my cousin in Haiti about the ground shaking and the refrigerator coming out of the wall towards her. “Tatie (Aunt), something just happened, but we are ok.” Then the line went dead. Every attempt my mom made afterwards to call back was unsuccessful, and she was now glued to the television to find out what had happened. For the next several hours, days, and weeks, almost every Haitian in the diaspora was also glued to their TVs to get details on the incident and to find out if their family and friends were ok.

What happened was a devastating and decimating 7.0 earthquake which led to vast devastation, death, and chaos. Estimates range from 100,000 to 300,000 dead, over one million homeless, and millions of dollars’ worth of property damage. Even the Presidential Palace (the Haitian White House) was destroyed. Over fifty aftershocks hit the country in the weeks after the earthquake which further complicated rescue and recovery efforts. International aid poured into Haiti to assist the country during one of the worst tragedies it had ever seen, and international media also came to the island to chronicle the aftermath of the earthquake as it unfolded. They captured the worst and best sides of Haiti: intense mourning, anguish, confusion, and violence alongside strength,

resiliency, and hope. Images circulated of Haitians covered in ash and blood, sobbing in confusion and walking aimlessly in the street. Strangers hugged and comforted one another. Bulldozers moved dozens of bodies for mass burial. In one CNN clip, a Haitian man used his bare hands to dig his wife out of their collapsed home. Suddenly, after years of dismissing it and largely ignoring it, the world was watching Haiti again.

The reverberations of the earthquake were felt in the Haitian diaspora, including the Chicago hub. Catherine D. called the Haitian earthquake just as monumental as September 11th for those on the homeland and in the diaspora.\(^{578}\) Each respondent answered the question about the 2010 earthquake with vivid detail about where they were when they heard about the disaster and the process of dealing with its aftermath. Their experiences followed a similar narrative: someone alerted them to what had occurred; they shared the news with family and friends in the diaspora; they attempted, mostly unsuccessfully, to contact family in Haiti; and then they watched their televisions to get up to date information on what was happening. They also turned to each other for solidarity and comfort, gathering at each other’s homes and local churches, like the Grace Haitians Alliance Church on the city’s south side, to talk and pray about what had happened and what would come.\(^{579}\)

With phone connections unreliable, social media outlets like Facebook and Twitter helped in the search for family members and friends. “Appeals for help were going viral on the Web. On-the-ground dispatches were shooting around on Twitter, and loved ones were posting photographs of missing relatives on Facebook pages.”\(^{580}\) Several oral history respondents used Facebook and other social media to get information on their

\(^{578}\) Catherine D., interview by Author, June 21, 2016.  
relatives. Noelle A. first signed up for Facebook after the earthquake so she could get information on the recovery efforts from those on the ground.\footnote{Noelle A., interview by Author, August 13, 2016.} Sadly, what they found out was often not good. Many got word that their family members and friends had died in the quake, including Mae Y., whose stepmother died trying to save her father. Once her father (who was blind) learned that his wife had died, he too passed away.\footnote{Mae Y., interview by Author, September 27, 2016.} Another Chicagoan mourned the loss of four loved ones.\footnote{Oscar Avila, “Local Haitians Struggle to Check on Loved Ones.” \textit{Chicago Tribune}, January 13, 2010.} Those who survived, were left homeless and had to sleep outdoors in tents. My aunt and uncle, whose home was not destroyed, still slept outside due to their fear of the many aftershocks that followed. Damia H. shared the traumatic experience of not hearing from her mother who was in Haiti for three days after the earthquake. “When I finally heard her voice, I just started screaming in the bathroom at work. My co-workers surrounded me and we all just started praying together.”\footnote{Damia H., interview by Author, July 9, 2016.}

The earthquake inspired Haitians in the diaspora to mobilize just as disasters in the past had whether political or natural. The Haitian Congress to Fortify Haiti, based in Evanston, served as the regional hub for relief materials.\footnote{Lionel B., interview by Author, June 22, 2016.} They had just returned from visiting the black island republic to celebrate the 206th anniversary of Haitian Independence on January 1, 2010. In the days after the earthquake, they mobilized with other Haitian organizations in the city to return to the country to help. The middle-class professional members of the Chicago diaspora were able to use their skills to help in the relief efforts; Haitian doctors and nurses traveled to the country to help the many injured people. Elanie P., a nurse anesthetist, connected with a doctor who had previously done
work in Haiti to get on the first flight out to Haiti to help with the medical relief efforts.\textsuperscript{586} It took them two days to get there (typically a 3 hour flight), and upon arrival, the smell and sight of the earthquake was readily apparent. Even with many volunteers showing up, there didn’t seem to be enough help for all the people who had been affected.\textsuperscript{587}

The second generation took the helm of mobilizing earthquake relief efforts in Chicago, and they became the face of the Haitian diasporic experience in the press. Kwame Raoul, Illinois State Senator and son of Haitian immigrants who migrated to Chicago in the 1960s, symbolized the growing visibility and leadership of many second-generation Haitians in this moment. “Since the earthquake last week, many people have understandably turned to the state’s most prominent Haitian-American politician for some insight into Haiti’s seemingly eternal plight, and some guidance on how to help its suffering people.”\textsuperscript{588} In response, Raoul gave countless interviews about the quake, “wearing a lapel pin of the American and Haitian flags intertwined.”\textsuperscript{589} This symbolism highlighted Raoul’s dual identity which shaped his response to the earthquake and likely made the press more comfortable with interviewing him. He was an American, so he was approachable and could effectively communicate on behalf of his community. Similarly, other Haitian Americans that I spoke with were interviewed by national and local press outlets in order to share their stories and hopefully get some information about missing family. Adele C. went on CNN with pictures of her missing relative in hopes that she would get some information, while ABC news interviewed Noelle A. about the

\textsuperscript{586} Elania P., interview by Author, July 27, 2016.
\textsuperscript{587} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{589} Ibid.
earthquake’s impact on the Haitian diaspora in Chicago.\textsuperscript{590} Thus, an unintended consequence of the earthquake was to shine a light on the growing Haitian community in Chicago, and the second generation played a major role in this shift.

Most important, the earthquake served as the catalyst for Haitians across generation to return to their ancestral homeland. According to Lynellyn Long and Ellen Oxfeld, “return is an integral part of the migration experience,” and for many Chicago Haitians, the earthquake provided the chance to go home.\textsuperscript{591} Several Chicago Haitians that I spoke with were some of the first people to touch down in Haiti in the days and weeks after the earthquake. Catherine D.’s brother went to Haiti right away to search for missing family.\textsuperscript{592} Jacque P., whose brother serendipitously was flying to Haiti on the day of the quake, went right to work to help family and friends.\textsuperscript{593} The Haitian Congress brought the donated materials they amassed to Haiti three weeks after the earthquake, making sure that the material got to those in need. The earthquake inspired Damia H. to return to Haiti permanently, believing that if Haiti was going to get better, it would require those in the diaspora to come back home and stay there.\textsuperscript{594} For those who stayed in Chicago, their engagement with Haiti increased. Daisi T. attested to becoming more active in CHAI after the earthquake, while others lamented that younger Haitians had to do more for Haiti.\textsuperscript{595} Scholar Khalid Koser posits this shift back towards the homeland the final part of the diaspora lifecycle: patterns and process of dispersal → patterns of dispersal.

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
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\bibitem{593} Jacque P., interview by Author. June 25, 2016.
\bibitem{594} Damia H., interview by Author. July 9, 2016.
\bibitem{595} Daisi T., interview by Author, July 7, 2016.
\end{thebibliography}
settlement and identity formation \( \rightarrow \) perceptions of and return to the homeland.\(^{596}\) In this way, the Haitian diaspora in Chicago had now come full circle.

This dissertation examined how the Haitian diaspora in Chicago formed over time up to the critical moment of the earthquake. This diaspora is unique because of its historical ties to Haiti, its smaller and more middle-class makeup, its decentralized spatial existence, and the critical role of black women in its formation and growth. From its inception, Chicago had unique ties to Haiti, and this connection is hinged upon the oral tradition that Jean Baptiste Pointe DuSable founded the first non-native permanent settlement there in the late eighteenth century. Since then, black women led the way in resurrecting DuSable’s legacy in the city and in doing so, they created a space for black life in Chicago. Black women were also critical to diaspora formation in other ways: their travel between Haiti and Chicago after the end of the American occupation of Haiti led to the formation of a small but robust diaspora of Haitians over the course of the twentieth century. Educational opportunities brought many Haitians to Chicago, and this largely professional and middle-class diaspora lived in various parts of the city and suburbs. Without a centralized neighborhood to keep them rooted in Haitian culture, this diaspora remained connected through familial ties, kinship networks, and developing professional and philanthropic organizations.

This project adds to understandings of black international immigration, diaspora formation, and black identity formation. This study on Haitians in Chicago exposes the long history of black and brown immigration to this area of the country. With roots in the eighteenth century, late twentieth century changes in U.S. immigration policy and the rise of the Duvalier dictatorship in Haiti led Haitians to build a diasporic community in

Chicago. This community highlights the importance of black immigration to the Midwest over time and adds to the growing body of literature on this topic. Scholarship on diaspora usually focuses on areas with large and centralized communities, including the large body of literature on Haitians in New York and in Florida. However, this research on Haitians in Chicago uncovers a unique perspective on diaspora formation: how diasporas function on a smaller scale and thrive despite being separated spatially. Finally, the paradigm of the black immigrant also expands notions of blackness in the United States beyond racial categorization. The various ethnic and cultural backgrounds within black culture in U.S. creates a heterogeneous community with varying ideas on what it means to be black in America.

This project sought to give a comprehensive overview of why and how the Haitian diaspora formed in Chicago but there is still a great deal to cover. Future research topics include the role of churches in Chicago and other Haitian organizations in the city. I also hope to augment my archive of oral histories on Haitian descendant people in Chicago as a way to get a more comprehensive view of the community, including those who may not have come to Chicago for educational and/or professional pursuits. Finally, I hope eventually to compare the Haitian diaspora in Chicago with other black immigrant groups, including the Jamaicans and African immigrant populations. These diasporas are larger and continue to grow within the city; I believe their stories would expand understandings of the black immigrant experience and the diasporic Midwest.

The earthquake and its aftermath signaled a new moment for the Haitian diaspora in Chicago. The diaspora was fully established in the city by the time the earthquake hit, and its visibility increased from that point on. The opening of a Haitian restaurant, Chez
Violette, in December 2010 symbolized this new era in the diaspora. That same year, the Michigan Avenue Bridge in downtown Chicago was renamed the DuSable Bridge and honored as a Chicago landmark. Bessie Neal attended the renaming ceremony on behalf of the DuSable League, the organization which promoted the official recognition of the pioneer in the city after the National DuSable Memorial Society. Her mother-in-law, Alice Neal, “devoted her life to having a street in downtown Chicago named after Jean Baptiste Point DuSable…but she died before DuSable had a citywide recognition.”597 Neal continued in the footsteps of her mother in law and “spent many sleepless nights and a lot of money” to get the bridge renamed in his honor. The bridge was not a street, but its renaming represented the century-long effort of black women to have DuSable commemorated officially in the city. It seems that by 2010, the future of Haitian Chicago, the metaphorical descendants of DuSable, seemed bright.

Appendix

The oral history interviews used for this study were conducted over a two year period, between October 2014 and October 2016. Forty were completed during that period, both in person and via phone. I contacted subjects based on my parents’ connections within the community which led to further contacts; each person that I interviewed connected me with at least one other person who could be interviewed. As an insider in the community, it was important for me to critically engage my subjects by remaining neutral to their responses and probing for further information with follow-up questions when necessary. I also utilized my other source material to compare the information received during the oral histories.

I developed two sets of questions for the interviews: one for those who migrated to Chicago and a second for children of immigrants. The goal of these questions was to understand why Haitians chose Chicago and to look at issues of identity formation in the diaspora. I also asked specific questions on issues critical to Haitian history, including the Duvaliers’ presidency and the 2010 earthquake. These questions, found on pages 223 and 224, not only provided uniformity to the oral histories, they also allowed for analytic comparison of the various answers provided by the participants. I found similarities and differences in experience based on their answers to the standard set of questions which added depth to this study.

I researched the theory and methodology of conducting oral history interviews. Rhonda Williams’ article “I am a Keeper of Information: History Telling and Voice” (2001) exposed the performative nature involved in telling one’s history and the importance of the interviewer to pay attention to the performance. Williams argues that
oral history interviewers must interrogate “the various articulations and performative aspects of the interview that we may marginalize, but which add richness and may reveal multiple levels of information in the oral history encounter.” Because of this, I paid attention to facial expression, body language, vocal inflection, pauses, and repetition of certain details as I conducted each interview to reveal nuances and complexities within each story. When I employ my oral histories in the text, I used the unspoken aspects to address the disconnections within the diaspora and add depth to what was being said.

Beverly Bell argues that oral histories provide both a story and a history because participants are (re)constructing their past. Her text, *Walking on Fire: Haitian Women’s Stories of Survival and Resistance* (2001), relies heavily on oral histories with Haitian women, and she notes how time and space impact what and how much participants share. For Haitians, the dangerous sociopolitical turmoil in Haiti combined with the fragility regarding immigration statuses mitigates what many of them might share. Bell notes that many of the women she interviewed were silenced during the violent aftermath of the coup that ousted Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 1991 and that it was only after he was reinstated in 1994 that they could share their stories. “At no other time in Haiti’s history would large numbers of women have been able to speak so openly.” However, I found that the majority of my respondents were very open and detailed in their responses. It seems they felt that sharing their stories would preserve the community’s history over time. Still, I have provided aliases for each participant as to protect their privacy.

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Immigrant Questions

1. Please state your name, birth year, year of immigration, and occupation.

2. When and why did you come to the United States? Specifically, Chicago?

3. Tell me about your family. Did they migrate to the United States, Chicago as well? Do you still have family in Haiti? Do you have any children? If so, were they born in the U.S.?

4. What was your first job here in the U.S.? What other jobs have you held? Did you go to school in the U.S.?

5. How do you define your community? How has your community changed over time?

6. What sorts of organizations, if any, have you taken part in? Tell me about your experiences within this organization(s) and what drove you to join. Also, are you still part of this organization(s) today?

7. What do you do for fun? Are there any Haitian holidays, traditions you still celebrate?

8. What does Haiti, being Haitian mean to you? How else do you identify?

9. Take me back to January 12, 2010 and your experience around the earthquake; What is the future of Haiti and its diaspora?

10. Jean-Claude (Baby Doc) Duvalier passed away on October 4, 2014. What are your thoughts on his legacy and its impact on Haiti?
Child of Immigrant Questions

1. Please state your name, birth year, and occupation.

2. When and why did your family come to the United States, specifically Chicago? What do your parents do for work?

3. When did you realize that you were Haitian? How did your heritage impact your childhood (i.e. relations with classmates and friends)?

4. Do you speak French or Haitian Creole?

5. How do you define your community? How has your community changed over time?

6. What sorts of organizations, if any, have you taken part in? Tell me about your experiences within this organization(s) and what drove you to join. Also, are you still part of this organization(s) today?

7. What do you do for fun? Are there any Haitian holidays, traditions you still celebrate?

8. What does Haiti, being Haitian mean to you? How else do you identify?

9. Take me back to January 12, 2010 and your experience around the earthquake; What is the future of Haiti and its diaspora?

10. Jean-Claude (Baby Doc) Duvalier passed away on October 4, 2014. What are your thoughts on his legacy and its impact on Haiti?
Table 1: Oral History Respondents and Interview Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Birth Year</th>
<th>Immigration Year</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Interview Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Thomas D.</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>born in France, moved to Chicago within a few months</td>
<td>doctor</td>
<td>10/06/2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Jasper L.</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>Born in Chicago</td>
<td>High school counselor, artist/musician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Wyatt G.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Catherine D.</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Born in Chicago</td>
<td>Banker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Lionel B.</td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Judge and politician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Daisi T.</td>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Born in Chicago</td>
<td>Human rights advocate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Magda B.</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Lance A.</td>
<td>1932</td>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Karl D.</td>
<td>1943</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Mechanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>Adele C.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Came at age 13</td>
<td>Accountant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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