



# ASSOCIATION OF HAITIAN WOMEN IN BOSTON

## OUR MISSION

AFAB's mission is to empower Haitian women by helping them develop individual and collective capacity to improve their social, economic and political status and thus effect positive change in their lives and the lives of their families.

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Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I would like to start my message to you by referencing a poem, "Quaking Conversation," by Lenelle Moïse, which begins

*I want to talk about Haiti,  
how the earth had to break  
the island's spine to wake  
the world up to her screaming...*



Data Source: MINUSTAH GIS, UN

I choose these words because I too want to talk about Haiti. Grief, sadness, anger, and hope are the conditions within our Haitian community in the aftermath of the January 12th earthquake in Haiti. We grieve for our family members, friends, and colleagues, especially the loss of three women leaders—Anne Marie Coriolan, Magalie Marcelin, and Myriam Merlet.

As you know, Haiti spearheaded the liberation movement against slavery in the Americas in 1804. In return, the nation has had to face years of embargo, occupation and destabilizing trade policies imposed by Western powers. We question why this is. We strongly believe that Haiti deserves a chance to move toward a sustainable economy.

We thank the American people for their tremendous generosity. That said, we question some of the approaches used in the disaster relief and reconstruction planning. In addition, we believe that specialized attention must be given to women and children in addressing food distribution, health needs and safety—and support organizations that have adopted this approach.

The catastrophe of January 12th resulted in an outpouring of support both in Haiti and in the Haitian communities in the diaspora. This gives us hope! That is why we are seizing the opportunity to call on concerned individuals to not only donate their time and money, but to also engage in deep reflection in order to develop true partnerships with the Haitian people.

—Carline Desire, Executive Director

## THE LOSS OF THREE HAITIAN WOMEN'S RIGHTS LEADERS ON JANUARY 12, 2010

Three strong voices fell silent under the rubble after one of the worst natural disasters in history. When the earth stopped shaking, three leading members of the Haitian women's movement were among the dead: Myriam Merlet, Magalie Marcelin, and Anne Marie Coriolan.

These strong women founded three of Haiti's leading women's rights' organizations: Enfofanm, Kay Fanm, and SOFA. These organizations and the women behind them were integral to the resurrection of the Haitian women's movement after 1986 and the fall of the Duvalier regime, which claimed the lives of hundreds of women. They were the voices of reason, equality, justice, and hope in Haiti.

Myriam, Magalie, and Anne Marie worked together for decades to inspire change in how women are viewed in Haitian society, and represented Haitian feminist activism through their advocacy against domestic violence and rape, as well as on the protection of sexual and reproductive rights, among other goals. All three worked vigorously to create the National Coordination for Advocacy on Women's Rights to advocate for women's rights and improve their socio-economic and political status.

These three women had an incredible vision of the opportunities for Haitian women. They were fierce fighters for equal rights, especially equal protection and promotion of women's socio-political and economic rights.

Myriam Merlet

Magalie Marcelin

Anne Marie Coriolan

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\* "Quaking Conversation" © 2010 by Lenelle Moïse  
See also [www.lenellemoise.com](http://www.lenellemoise.com)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We humbly acknowledge and thank the following organizations for their unwavering support of AFAB and our mission.

### *DORCHESTER PEOPLE FOR PEACE*

Dorchester People for Peace (DPP) is an organization devoted to opposing violence and war on local and international fronts, specifically the war in Iraq and US militarism. On the home front, the mission is directed to work against such issues as racism and political repression in addition to creating a multi-racial peace movement within the communities of Dorchester.



*DPP presents a check of more than \$4500 to AFAB*

DPP has provided invaluable support over the years and has been a key ally in our Haiti Earthquake Relief efforts. Serving as volunteers and resources, DPP recently sponsored a Benefit Dinner for AFAB at The Great Hall in Codman Square on February 16, 2010. The dinner featured Magalie Lamour, a health advocate who spent two weeks in Haiti; and Carmelle Bonhommetre and Carline Desiré of AFAB.

### *HARVARD UNIVERSITY'S FRENCH DEPARTMENT*

The French Department at Harvard University looks to create an intellectual atmosphere for students to learn a language by exploring all aspects of culture through different media, including literature. Students are able to examine culture through a wide range of classes that accommodate different interests.



Members of the Harvard University community facilitate a French class and offer ESL tutoring to AFAB youth members from 1 to 3 pm on Saturdays.

### *HAITIAN SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY*

The Haitian Scientific Society (HSS) is a non-profit organization comprised of Haitian professionals who create a forum for underrepresented minorities to further their intellectual understanding and get involved in community activities. The HSS was founded in 1996, and provides math tutoring for middle school and high school students at AFAB from 2 to 5 pm on Saturdays.

## YOUTH ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

A collaboration between the Association of Haitian Women in Boston (AFAB), the Center for Information Documentation and Research on Haiti (SEDRA), and the Haitian-American Educators of Massachusetts (HAEM), the Youth Enrichment Program was created as an initiative to help ensure that youth pass the MCAS exams in Math and English, and that they graduate to the next grade level. The program is held on Mondays and Wednesdays, 4 to 8 pm, during the months of July and August.



The 17 students who participated in the 2009 program found it extremely helpful and asked that tutoring in more subjects be included in future programs.

## AYITI DEMEN

Culture is the fundamental building block of identity. Through cultural learning children gain a feeling of belonging, a sense of personal history, and security in knowing who they are and where they come from. Dr. Geneva Gray states, "a clarified ethnic identity is central to the psycho-social well-being and educational success of youth of color." With this in mind, AFAB incorporated Ayiti Demen, a fun and exciting program to help young Haitians and Haitian Americans to be more in touch with their culture and learn about their ancestral history.



*Singer Emeline Michel with participants of Ayiti Demen*

Ayiti Demen meets on Saturdays from 2 to 5 pm. Please call AFAB to enroll your children (ages 5-11) in the program.

## IN MEMORY OF MYRIAM MERLET, MAGALIE MARCELIN, AND ANNE MARIE CORIOLAN

*All of them, my newest ancestors.  
All of them, hovering now,  
watching our collective response,  
keeping, score, making bets...*

*Because my people have names.  
Because my people have nerve.  
Because my people are  
your people in disguise.*

*I want to talk about Haiti.  
I always talk about Haiti.  
My mouth, quaking with her love,  
complexity, honor & respect.*

*From "Quaking Conversation"*

*continued from page 1*



**Myriam Merlet** was the chief of staff of the Haitian Ministry of Women, at the time of her death. She was an outspoken feminist who drew international attention to the use of rape as a political weapon. Eve Ensler creator of V-day described Myriam as a force of Haiti, a light, and a great feminist of her time. She fled Haiti under the repressive regime of Duvalier in the 70s, but she returned to her homeland in the 80s to further her life's work. She stood up to fight against racial and gender inequality. She worked tirelessly to bring the *Vagina Monologues* to the women of Haiti. She also worked in conjunction with the Women's Ministry to open the first Haiti Sorority Safe House, the V-Day Safe House for abused women. Merlet also founded Enfofamm, the first Haitian feminist organization that used media to promote women's rights.



**Magalie Marcelin** was a true believer in women's rights. Exiled during the Duvalier reign of terror because she was part of a group that used grassroots theatre for consciousness-raising, she lived in Canada where she studied law. She would soon return to Haiti after the fall of Duvalier to advocate for women's and political rights. She founded Kay Fanm, a women's rights organization that started the first shelter for battered women in Haiti and made loans to women business owners. Magalie used her profession in the service of Haitian women in Haiti. She was the leader of a movement that helped bring rape to the forefront of the Haitian courts. She once packed a courtroom with women who were able to experience first hand the guilty verdict of a known human rights' abuser. She was described as a champion of human rights, someone who loved her country, and someone who never stopped believing in women's rights. She died while helping a woman launch a grassroots organization.



**Anne Marie Coriolan** was a sociologist who studied in Mexico. Many people considered her a giant women's rights activist because she was a shaper of the women's movement in Haiti. She served as a top advisor to help the Women's Ministry to raise consciousness against violence. Anne Marie was a political organizer who brought faces to the crime of rape and changed the way rape is viewed in Haiti. She founded Solidarite Fanm Ayisyen (Solidarity with Haitian Women) an advocacy organization, which was instrumental in helping rape become a criminal offense in Haiti in 2005. This was something desperately needed because, before the earthquake struck, a survey of Haitian women showed that approximately 72% of those surveyed had been raped and 40% of them were victims of domestic violence.

The death of these three pioneers will surely leave a vacuum in the struggle to end inequality and violence against women in Haiti. Nevertheless, they leave a legacy for those women who survived to carry on the torch of Haitian feminist activism. Perhaps their fitting legacy will begin with the Feminist International Solidarity Camp, named after Myriam Merlet, to help mobilize, transfer resources, and open channels of communication directly with Haitian women. The project, which is founded and organized solely by women, will act as a resource center for international solidarity efforts to send resources directly to Haitian women, and will work with human rights' defenders from Haiti to demand legal action against human rights violations. The camp also includes a health center that offers resources to help Haitians deal with the aftermath of the earthquake.

Maybe Myriam, Magalie, and Anne Marie's deaths were the ultimate price to pay for a more just and equitable Haitian society. They deeply believed that in order for Haiti to move forward, women must be moved from the margin to the center of Haiti's daily affair. Let us hope that in the reconstruction of Haiti, women will truly be at the center of the long lasting struggle for economic, social, cultural, and political rights.



## AFAB ANNOUNCEMENTS

### SAVE THE DATE:

**Annual Clergy  
Breakfast**  
June 12, 2010  
9:00AM

**Annual Domestic  
Violence Forum**  
August 7, 2010  
9:00AM

**Annual Fundraising  
Dinner**  
October 17, 2010  
6:00PM

**Kapte Ayiti Fokis  
Chack Dimanch**

**Tune in to Ayiti  
Fokis Every Sunday  
(in Haitian Kreyol)**  
WMBR 88.1FM  
8:00AM – 10:00AM

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Social Work Interns  
Management Interns  
Literacy Instructors  
Office Support

**NAN MEMWA MYRIAM MERLET, MAGALIE MARCELIN AK ANNE MARIE CORIOLAN. TWA FANM VANYAN KI MOURI NAN TRABLEMANDTE KI TE DEVASTE AYITI JOU KI TE 12 JANVYE 2010 LA.**

Nou wè foto dezans la. Nou gade moun ki chape kòm pa mirak. Twa vwa tonbe nan silans anba dekonm aprè youn nan pi gwo dezans natirèl nan listwa. Lè tè a sispann tranble, twa lidè poto mitan nan mouvman fanm an Ayiti te gentan pami mò yo. Myriam Merlet, Magalie Marcelin ak Anne Marie Coriolan.

Fanm Vanyan sa yo te fonde twa nan òganizasyon k ap lite pou dwa fanm e yo te travay pou anviron trant lane pou enspire chanjman nan jan sosyete Ayisyenn lan wè fanm. Twa medam sa yo senbolize retou mouvman fanm lan an Ayiti aprè dechoukay rejim Divalye a ki te touye plizyè santèn fanm. Yo te reprezante aktivite fanm lan an Ayiti nan batay kont vyolans domestik, kadejak e nan pwoteksyon dwa seksyèl ak repwodiksyon elatriye. Yo te reprezante Enfo Fanm, Kay Fanm ak SOFA, twa òganizasyon ki nan tèt mouvman fanm an Ayiti aprè 1986. Touletwa te travay san pran souf pou kreye kòdinasyon nasyonal pou defann dwa fanm e amelyore estati sosyal ekonomik ak politik medam yo. Medam sa yo te vwa rezon, egalite, jistis ak espwa an Ayiti.

Jou **Myriam Merlet** mouri a li te chèf pèsonèl nan Minisè Fanm an Ayiti. Paske li te yon fanm ki pa t konn mete dlo nan bouch li pou deklare byen klè e byen fò sa l panse li te atire atansyon entènasyonal sou itilizasyon kadejak kòm zam politik. Eve Ensler, kreyatèz 'Monolog Vajinal' dekri Myriam kòm yon fòs, yon limyè e yon gwo feminis nan epok li. Li te chape pou l anba rejim represif Divalye nan lane 1970 yo, men li te retounen nan ane 80 yo pou te kontinye lite nan travay mouvman fanm lan. Li te kanpe djanm pou batay kont inegalite ant fanm ak gason e rasyal. Li te travay san l pat janm bouke pou l ka fè fanm Ayiti wè "Monòlòg Vajen". Li te travay tou an akò ak minisè fanm pou louvri premye 'sorority' ak sant refij V-Day pou fanm yo abize. Merlet te fonde tou Enfo Fanm ki se premye òganizasyon fanm ki itilize medya pou fè konnen dwa fanm.

**Magalie Marcelin** se yon moun ki te kwè tout bon nan dwa fanm. Yo te egzile l pandan rejim krazezo Divalye a paske li te nan yon gwoup ki te konn itilize mouvman òganizasyon de baz ak teyat popilè pou konsyantize moun. Li te viv Kanada kote li te etidye dwa. Li retounen britsoukou lè rejim Divalye a tonbe pou defann dwa fanm. Se li ki te fonde Kay Fanm, yon òganizasyon fanm ki te kòmanse premye pwojè lojman pou fanm yo abize an Ayiti epi ki te prete fanm ki gen komès yo lajan. Magalie te itilize pwofesyon pou l sèvi fanm ayisyen an Ayiti. Li te lidè yon mouvman ki ede trennen kadejak yo nan tribinal. Yon fwa, li te mennen yon pil fanm vin anvayi tribinal la pou yo te ka asiste kondanasyon yon abizè popilè. Yo dekri Magalie kòm yon chanpyon dwa moun, yon moun ki renmen peyi l e yon moun ki p ap janm sispann kwè nan dwa fanm. Li mouri pandan l t ap lanse yon lòt òganizasyon de baz.

**Anne Marie Coriolan** se te yon sosyòlòg ki te etidye nan peyi Meksik. Anpil moun te konsidere l kòm yon potrik aktivis pou dwa fanm paske li te bay mouvman an fòm an Ayiti. Li te sèvi kòm yon konseyèz antèt pou ede Minisè Fanm konsyantize popilasyon an kont vyolans. Anne Marie te yon òganizatè politik ki te mete figi sou krim yo rele 'kadejak' la, epi li te chanje jan yo gade kadejak an Ayiti. Li te fonde Solidarite Fanm Ayisyen, yon òganizasyon pou defans ki te jwe yon wòl fondamantal nan fè kadejak tounen yon zak kriminèl an Ayiti lan lane 2005. Se te yon gwo nesite paske avan tranblemandtè a, yon etid sou fanm Ayisyen te montre ke a pe prè 72% nan fanm ki te patisipe yo te sibi zak kadejak e 40% ladan yo te sibi zak vyolans domestik.

Twa medam sa yo te genyen yon vizyon enkwayab sou opòtinite fanm Ayisyen. Yo te batay ak tout zantray yo pou tout moun gen menm dwa, sitou menm pwoteksyon ak pwomosyon dwa sosyal, politik ak ekonomik. Lamò twa piyonye sa yo ap, asireman, kite yon vid nan lit pou fini inegalite ak vyolans kont fanm an Ayiti. De tout fason yo kite yon eritaj pou fanm ki rete vivan pou kontinye pote byen wo fanm aktivis feminis Ayisyen. Petèt eritaj batay yo a ap kòmanse avèk kan solidarite feminin entènasyonal ki pote non Myriam Merlet pou ede mobilize e transfere resous e ouvri koulwa kominikasyon dirèkteman ak fanm Ayisyen. Pwojè sa a ki te fonde e òganize sèlman pa fanm, pral sèvi kòm yon sant de resous pou efò solidarite entènasyonal pou voye resous dirèkteman pou fanm ayisyen e travay avèk moun k ap defann dwa moun an Ayiti pou mande pou yo trennen devan lajistis tout aksyon ki vyole dwa moun. Kan sa a gen ladan l tou yon sant sante ki ofri resous pou ede Ayisyen fè fas ak konsekans tranblemandtè a.

Petèt lanmò Myriam, Magalie ak Anne Marie se dènye pri pou peye pou yon sosyete ayisyen pi jis e pi ekitab. Pi gwo konviksyon yo se te: pou Ayiti avanse fòk fanm sòti arebò pou vini nan mitan aktivite k ap fèt an Ayiti chak jou. An nou espere nan rekonstriksyon Ayiti a, fanm yo ap nan mitan nan lit byen long pou dwa ekonomik, sosyal, kiltirèl ak politik.

## AFAB-KAFANM SERVICES:

**HOUSING AND HOUSING ADVOCACY:** KAFANM runs six housing units and a community center. AFAB assists newly-arrived Haitian immigrants in applying for public housing benefits, and facilitates workshops on housing issues such as tenant rights and home buying.

**ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS:** Our adult education programs provide individuals with the fundamental skills necessary to learn English, secure gainful employment and to better integrate themselves into society.

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION:** AFAB affirms the right of abused women to be safe and to prosecute their offenders when necessary. A cornerstone of our mission, the domestic violence prevention program provides essential support to domestic violence survivors and their families while they attempt to regain control of their lives. The Haitian Round Table on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault meets every first Wednesday of the month with different providers joining forces in the fight against domestic violence.

**YOUTH DEVELOPMENT:** Our youth programs enrich the lives of our students through the delivery of solid academic and social skills. They prepare students to face life's challenges and bridge generational and cultural gaps within the Haitian community.

**COMMUNITY OUTREACH:** The outreach program engages in raising awareness on all our social services, specifically on domestic violence prevention and immigration issues.