



Dear Friends,

We are writing to invite you to a discussion on advocacy. More precisely, we hope you can participate in a conversation that will lead to a set of priorities around which we – the collective Haitian diaspora – can activate the powerful voice of Haitian-Americans.

Over a year has gone by since that faithful afternoon on January 12th when our hearts ached for those we lost and a place in ruins that will always be home. Shortly after the quake, many of us quickly mobilized money, supplies, our networks and ourselves into action. Naturally we are still responding; as members of the “11th department”, it is not easy to forget or let go.

But despite our best efforts much work remains, on the ground and in policy circles in Washington, DC and Port-au-Prince where important conversations about Haiti’s future loom large. As civically engaged members of the Haitian American Diaspora we understand the importance of participating in these discussions about Haiti. For example, more than 400 of us responded last March to the Organization of American States’ (OAS) call for a meeting at their Headquarters in Washington DC. In the run-up to the donor’s conference at United Nations (UN), the goal of this three-day event was to develop a coordinated strategy that addresses key issues in the recovery, reconstruction and development efforts in Haiti.

The diaspora has since held a number of convenings, dialogues and forums on Haiti’s recovery and construction. However, more than a year later it has become clear to us that our involvement with Haiti must go beyond that of “emergency responders”. We know that the policies that affect Haiti are being developed in key power centers such as Quebec, Paris, and Washington DC and at large international institutions such the United Nations in New York. Building on the work that has been done in the past, we believe it is time that we become strategic partners of the people of Haiti by engaging the US based policy makers as well as those with influence over Haiti’s development.

While a number of organizations have begun to advocate on behalf of Haiti, relatively few of these efforts are led by the diaspora itself. In the spirit of taking our collective efforts forward, the **Haitian Fund for Innovation (NY)**, **Konbit for Haiti (FL)**, the **Lambi Fund (Haiti)**, and **Oxfam America (Boston/DC)** are coming together to host a series of listening sessions in major cities with large diaspora populations over the next few months to hear your perspective on how the diaspora can create and activate a focus advocacy agenda in the interest of Haiti.

In collaboration with the **Boston Haitian Reporter**, which will help us document this effort, **we would like to invite you to the Reggie Lewis Track and Athletic Center, 1350 Tremont Street in Roxbury Crossing, on Thursday, July 14 from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. for a working meeting of diverse leaders to help craft this common advocacy agenda.** By the end of the tour we will produce a report of the findings which we will share with you and present back to the community and then begin to work on how to actualize the common goal(s)/priorities articulated both locally and nationally.

We hope you will join us for this timely conversation. Now more than ever, your voice is needed.

Sincerely,

Johnny Celestin, Leonie Hermantin, Maggie Austin, Manolia Charlotin and Sophia Lafontant