

# Family interview

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Haiti Paper Personal experience with the immediate socio-economic and political environment offers critical information on the characteristic of any given community. In the context of Haiti history, the mixture of races and rich cultural heritage that dates back to Spanish occupation before French is a factor that contributes to this country's multicultural interaction. With uncontrolled rate of immigration and emigration from and into the neighboring United States, one has a lot to learn from the social framework, economic and political history of Haiti. An encounter with a close relative like an aunt in this case gives an insight into the effect of the colonial socio-political and economic structure that has remained to define Haiti society to date. Critical assessment of the Haiti history shows significant cultural homogeneity with emphasis on religious practices that is dominated by Christianity. Of sensitive interest is the voodoo religion which can be traced back to the central African natives blended with American natives during the slavery period. It is therefore in the interest of the scholars and general public to understand the series of social reconstruction that Haiti has gone through in order to attain its current identity. Even the name was changed and some events are undertaken to date in commemoration of the French departure in the era of Marcus guvey. A family interview forms an important primary source of data in as far as the history and contemporary culture of Haiti is concerned. Besides, the information obtained reflect significant overall socio-economic and political trend across Latin America.

My Aunt who was the respondent in this interview used the concept of health as being based on the equilibrium and balance between hot (cho) and cold (fret). She holds the strong belief that sadness, excessive anger and fear are

key health contributors. She believes that the spiritual well being i. e. being prayerful is an indication of spiritual good while illness is a result of a wrong doing and disrespect to the deity.

Growing up in the Port au Prince Haiti, my Aunt had three sisters and four brothers. Her parents were raised in Haiti though moved to the US in their late twenties. She went to the United States when she was twenty eight and grew up together with her siblings, which strengthened the family bond between them. They are so close that a day barely passes without the siblings meeting. My Aunts mother was born in Ouanaminthe which is a small town in the Northern part of Haiti, with an approximated population of Population while the father was born in Haïtien (Haitian Creole: Okap or KapAyisyen, often referred to as Le Cap. The town which is refferered to as Cape Haitian in English is a commune with a population of approximately 190, 000 on the Northern Coast of Haiti. The maternal grandparents were born and raise din Quananminthe while the paternala grandparents were born and raised in Cap-Haïtien. Dash, 2001)

Being a Christian, my Aunt went to a private Christian school. Both my husband and children are also Christians with my husband who is also Haitian being very active in Church. Being a Sunday schoolteacher and a member of the choir, my Aunt attends church twice a week. She is strong in her religion that they have a daily bible study with the family. (Marcus, 2009)

Just like other parts of Latin America, Haiti is predominantly inhabited by Christians with 16% members of Protestantism while approximately 80% are Roman Catholics. There are small group of the populace which are Hindus

and Muslims mainly found in the Port-au-Prince. Another religion that is practiced by Haitians is Vodou. The religion encompasses different unique traditions consisting of a mixture of Western and Central African, Native American and European. The practice has been embraced by the believers despite the associated negative stigma it's associated with, both within and out of the country. Despite the fact that the exact number of practitioners of Vodou is not known, it is believed that a small group of people still practice the tradition besides their Christian faith. There are also few Christians who also indirectly participate in some rituals. (Dash, 2001)

The most important holiday in Haiti is the Independence Day. The country got its independence on 1st January 1804 being the first Black Country to gain independence. The traditional original name of Haiti was Ayiti, "Quisqueya, Bohio," Christopher Columbus named the Island "Hispaniola," when he discovered it in 1492. He named it Hispaniola, "Little Spain," to honor the Spanish Crown. The name later changed to Haiti which means a mountainous island. When the country gained its independence, all the inhabitants started eating pumpkin soup (soupe Joumou), a demonstration that everyone is equal. The soup that is still being eaten by the populace on Independence Day was a symbol that French colonizers were no longer in control and away to celebrate freedom. They hated being treated like slaves in their country by being told do's and don'ts in their country. (Marcus, 2009)

The largest yearly event in Haiti occurs throughout the country. The Carnival entails rapades, dancing, music and costumes in the entire streets during the holy season of Carnival. Easter usually falls after the Fat Tuesday

and different families dine on banquets in their respective homes. The festival however continues in the street throughout the night. (Blashfield, 2008)

The Haitian music reflects the African, French and Spanish elements among other people who have inhabited on the Caribbean Island. The music styles are peculiar to the Island of Hispaniola which includes those derived from Rataparding music, Rasin movement, Vodou traditions, Compas, Mini-jazz, Hip Hop Kreyol, Twoubadou ballads as the core rhythm. Compass is the most popular currently which was popularized by Nemours Jean-Baptiste, on one of his recordings which he released in 1955. Compas is derived from compass which is a Spanish word meaning tones and rhythm. It entails mainly beats of medium and fast tempo. It puts a lot of emphasis on the synthesizers, electric guitars, horn section, and saxophone.

Dancing is part of lifestyle in Haito. In Vodou traditions for instance, experience when one is possessed by spirit is accompanied by drumming, singing and dancing. Rara and Carnival events are also associated with dancing. Dancing is regarded as a social activity and use in different celebrations. In restaurants, twoubadou which is a small group usually provide small dance in small restaurants while big ones usually feature dance bands reminiscent. Ability to dance in Haiti was traditionally considered as a sign of good breeding. ( Dash, 2001)

#### References

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