



## AGENDA

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- 9:00 am** Registration  
**9:40 am** Welcome /Introduction  
Mark Lapointe, Esq., President of HAP  
**9:50 am** How to be the ideal candidate for public office  
**10:25 am** How to finance your political campaign  
**11:00 am** How to stay clear of ethical and legal pitfalls during and after the race  
**11:30 am** Q & A

## Panelists

Commissioner Jean Monestime, Miami Dade  
Judge Fred Seraphin  
Andrew Korge  
Dr. Jean-Phillipe Austin  
Juan Cuba  
Mark Lapointe, Esq.

## Moderators

Ms. Cassandra Theramene  
Phillip Agnew

During the early 1970s a massive influx of Haitians arrived in the U.S., fleeing the Duvalier regime. Most of these immigrants relocated to major cities in the U.S., including New York, Boston, Chicago and Miami. Moreover, as a result of the devastating earthquake that struck Port-au-Prince, Haiti on January 12, 2010, more Haitian American families who were living in Haiti relocated to South Florida. Today, Haitian Americans represent the second largest foreign-born population in Miami-Dade County, Florida, second only to Cuban Americans. The total number of Haitian Americans living in the U.S. is currently estimated to be about 1,000,000. This number may be greatly underestimated by the Census Bureau.

Even prior to the 2010 earthquake, Haiti had undergone many cycles of political and economic upheaval, resulting in major influxes of Haitian refugees. According to the Refugee Resettlement Project in Miami, between 1990 and 2000, over 50,000 Haitians fled Haiti, and the majority of these new arrivals settled in South Florida. Despite being granted Temporary Protected Status (TPS) by the U.S. Government after the Port-au-Prince earthquake, Haitian immigrants were reluctant to respond to governmental inquiry because they do not trust the motives of governmental institutions. Some agencies reported lower numbers of Haitians applying for TPS than expected. It is believed that many who were eligible greatly feared deportation to Haiti, which is repeatedly in a state of emergency. In addition, Census information and service providers traditionally have failed to completely distinguish Haitian-Americans from certain other groups. Perhaps more than any other groups who migrated to South Florida, Haitian Americans have struggled due to a high rate of illiteracy or minimal literacy (90 percent), language and cultural barriers, among other obstacles. It is worth noting that historically Haitians have contributed to the U.S. during the Revolution and the Civil War. However, many either assimilated or believed they were going back to Haiti someday, so they did not get involved in U.S. politics.

During the last decade, however, across the U.S., we have seen the emergence of a second generation of Haitian Americans who have begun to participate in the political process. The election of State Senator Raoul Kwame to the seat vacated by President Barack Obama in Chicago, Illinois, is one of a significant number of Haitian American elected officials nationwide, including city council members, county commissioners, state representatives, state senators, mayors and most recently a U.S. congresswoman.

Haitians in the United States have a lot in common with other non-Hispanic Caribbean diasporic communities. This commonality stems from the shared reason why these groups left their home country to begin with, the types of transnational contribution they make to their respective homelands and the fact that, until recently, they were operating on the sidelines of this country's politics. South Florida's large Caribbean community has too much in common to not coalesce into a decisive social, economic and political player in the region.

Despite this lack of a concerted strategy, however, the last decades have borne witness to the victory of a slew of leaders from the Caribbean in different state, county, and municipal elections. As a result, North Miami has become a Haitian stronghold, whereas Miramar has become the turf of Jamaican immigrants.

With the emergence of the new political leadership, there have, however, been some faux pas. Over the years, among others a number of Caribbean American elected officials have been charged with, and in some cases, indicted for corruption. This is a threat to our political future. It is important that we understand that the acts that, in our indulgent Caribbean culture, are seen as legitimate assertions of power, often constitute serious ethical violations in the U.S.

In keeping with its mission to ensure the political future of our communities, Haitian Americans for Progress (HAP) will organize a workshop for young Caribbean and African Americans interested in participating in the political process.