

MIAMI BOOK FAIR 2020

ReadCaribbean Program

<https://www.miamibookfaironline.com/event/the-queens-empresses-and-first-ladies-of-haiti>

Sunday, November 22, 2020

The Queens, Empresses, and First Ladies of Haiti

The history of Haiti includes many notable queens and empresses, such as Marie Claire Heureuse Félicité Bonheur, the wife of Haitian general Jean Jacques Dessalines; Marie Louise Coidavid, the wife of King Henry Christophe; and Adelina Soulouque, the wife of President Soulouque. Haiti's first ladies, such as Suzanne Simone Baptiste, the wife of Toussaint Louverture, leader of the Haitian revolution; Lucienne Heurtelou, the wife of President Dumarsais Estimé; Yolette Leconte, the wife of President Paul Eugene Magloire; and Michele Bennet, the wife of Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier; and so many more also share a vibrant historical heritage. For the most part, however, the queens, empresses, and first ladies of Haiti have remained in the shadows. In this panel, **Bayyinah Bello**, author of *SHEROES of the Haitian Revolution*, will explore the accomplishments and the considerable political power of these women. Moderated by **Marleine Bastien**, executive director of FANM, and **MJ Fievre**, author of *Badass Black Girl*.

MJ FIEVRE

- 32.28 Hello, everyone! My name is MJ "Jessica" Fievre, and I'm the coordinator of the ReadCaribbean program. I want to welcome you to Miami Book Fair 2020, the first online Miami Book Fair in our 36-year history. We are grateful to be part of Miami Dade College, a community college serving South Florida for more than 50 years. On behalf of the MDC Board of Trustees, the entire College family, and the staff, advisory committees, and supporters and sponsors of the Miami Book Fair, we wish you the very best, and hope you enjoy this program and all the others we are presenting at this Fair.
- 01:21.15 Our presentation today is part of the ReadCaribbean program, highlighting the vibrant and diverse literary culture of the Caribbean. ReadCaribbean is an extensive series of readings and panel discussions, activities for both children and adults, Haitian films, dance, music, etc. When appropriate, the presentations are in Haitian Creole, with the support of the Green Family Foundation and the Kimberly Green Latin American and Caribbean Center, who have once again championed the program this year.
- 01:59.81 A huge thank you to Jean Mapou and the whole team at Sosyete Koukouy who collaborated with the Miami Book Fair, as part of the ReadCaribbean program, with, for instance, the Little Haiti Book Festival, which takes place every May. Since 1985, Sosyete Koukouy has worked on preserving and promoting Haitian culture in the United States, among both Creole speakers and non-Creole speakers interested in learning about Haitian heritage.
- 02:36.85 Today, we welcome Marleine Bastien, the Executive Director of Family Action Network Movement for Women. Mrs. Bastien received a master's degree in social work from Florida International University, and she has more than 20 years of clinical experience and more than 10 years of direct administrative experience in the management of non-profit organizations. She has championed the cause of women, children and Haitian families through her dedicated advocacy in the areas of immigration and human rights, HIV/AIDS, breast cancer and domestic

violence. Good morning, Marleine.

MARLEINE BASTIEN

03:17.60 Good morning, Jessica. As you said, my name is Marleine Bastien. Today, we will chat with Jessica Fièvre and Bayyinah Bello. Let's say a few words about Jessica Fièvre, for those who don't know this strong woman. Jessica Fièvre is the coordinator for the ReadCaribbean program, as she said, and she is an author as well, *yon kokenn chenn fanm nwa*, and she helps writers, especially women writers who've experienced trauma. She helps them write, she helps them build their community, and she helps them with organizing the battle for social justice. She works with veterans, with disadvantaged youth, cancer patients, victims of domestic violence, the elderly, with children, and with patients with chronic diseases. In fact, Jessica Fièvre is a woman who's been working with passionate people for years, especially people who have a passion for writing; regardless of where they are, as long as they have the passion, well, Jessica Fièvre will help. She helps the youth as much as the elderly.

04:44.08 It is an honor too for us to welcome a woman whose reputation precedes her, a woman that I admire a lot. I've invited her to visit in the past, and since then I've always wanted to invite her again to come to Miami to chat with us. Although she is participating with us virtually this time around, it is still an honor, it is still a blessed day for us. Well, this extraordinary woman is Bayyinah Bello. She is the author of *Sheroes of the Haitian Revolution*, and she will speak to us about the queens, empresses, and the first ladies of Haiti's history. She is a historian, a writer, a poet, and a philanthropist.

05:41.50 She will discuss the lives of these women. We have heard about many of them, yet we don't know their life stories. She will speak for instance about Marie-Claire Heureuse Félicité Bonheur; about Marie-Louise Coidavid, the wife of Henri Christophe; about Adelina Soulouque, the wife of President Soulouque. She will also speak about other first ladies such as Suzanne Simone Baptiste, the wife of Toussaint Louverture, one of the heroes of Haiti; Lucienne Heurtelou, the wife of Dumarsais Estimé; Yolette Leconte, the wife of President Paul Eugène Magloire; Michèle Bennett that many of you know as the wife of Baby Doc Duvalier; and many more others. Today, that brave woman, that extraordinary woman, that strong woman, Bayyinah Bello will explore in depth the lives of these ladies, these extraordinary ladies. She knows that history does not speak about them enough. Ladies and gentlemen, for the introduction, I give you Jessica Fièvre.

MJ FIEVRE

07:11.06 Thank you to everyone joining us. It's with great pleasure that I welcome Bayyinah Bello. As Marleine so eloquently expressed it, Bayyinah is a very strong woman with an extensive knowledge of Haiti's history. And today, it's a pleasure for us to speak about the queens, empresses, and first ladies of Haiti's history. I read with pleasure Bayyinah's book, *Sheroes of the Haitian Revolution*, because when I was growing up in Haiti, only in passing were we taught about the role of women in History class. We'd hear about Catherine Flon who sewed the flag, but there was not much female representation in the books. Therefore, I was very pleased to discover all of these ladies. So, Bayyinah we give you the floor. Tell us about *Sheroes of the Haitian Revolution*.

BAYYINAH BELLO

- 08:12.12 Thank you! Thank you, Marleine. Thank you, Jessica, for this amazing introduction, all the prestigious qualifiers you gave me—I hope one day to live up to them. But in the meantime, I'll return these compliments to you. Here is *Sheroes of the Haitian Revolution*. It is my most recently published work. Although she is not a first lady, the woman on the cover is a huge deal, a monumental instructor, an important trainer. So, we will be starting with her because most likely, had it not been for her, we would not even know of the other ladies.
- 09:12.13 So, this is Aunt Toya. This woman was a soldier in Africa. In Dahomey, they had two armies: one for women, and one for men. And the women's army had more power than the men's. It was the women's army who ensured the security of the capital, as well as the personal safety of the kings and rulers. The women in that army were the only ones allowed to march alongside the king with their weapons. All the other soldiers, the men soldiers, had to surrender their weapons when they were around the King. So when we look at the life of that phenomenal woman, we must know that people did not have the right to... when you are a woman soldier in Dahomey at the time, no man was allowed to raise his eyes to you. When a woman soldier was approaching, you could hear the bells on her feet. All the men would get out of her way, they would even turn away, go the opposite direction, because they didn't have the right to raise their eyes to those women. Those were extraordinary women, and only when they were done with their mission, were they allowed to choose a husband. Men were not allowed to choose them as wives either; it's one of the reasons why their society did not allow men to look at them. So they were the ones doing the choosing, and at the right time they chose a husband to start a family—after completing their mission for their army, after several victories, and after having trained many generations.
- 10:54.93 Imagine taking such a woman, and putting her in slavery. And as she explained it: She was in a sacred forest when she felt eyes watching her, and she realized that 20 to 30 men were surrounding her. She fought and defeated several of them. Ultimately, they brought a finish net, and this is what they threw at her. This is how they took her, brought her to the slave ship, and sold her in Saint Domingue. Every time I think about her life, I wonder how she managed not to die of outrage. Here's a woman that men were not allowed to look at. She is now laying on blocks, and they are counting all her teeth, looking through all the holes in her body, to set a price and see who will pay the most to buy her. Yet, she survived all this, until eventually she was on the run. Having left her master's house, she wanted to set up an army in Saint Domingue, but she didn't find the people that she needed. She passed by a woman who was giving birth, and she helped her through it. After the mom had given birth, she felt that she was dying. She handed the child to Aunt Toya and said, "Please raise him for me. Teach him about freedom."
- 12:28.06 Aunt Toya was in slavery, and was now given the mission to raise a kid and make sure he would know freedom. This was an important responsibility! She eventually decided to go back to her master's house with the baby because she thought that, if the baby did not know about slavery, he would not understand how to break free from it. So she went back to her master's house with him. She raised that child; she taught him about spirituality, astronomy, and history, and she gave him military training. She gave him all the education he needed. This child would be later known as Jean Jacques Dessalines.
- 13:11:46 Even if she didn't have any title in Saint Domingue, we have to know about Aunt Toya, the mother of our hero; she created the liberator for us. She created the person who could give us the freedom we were looking for. So, she is a phenomenal woman, an amazing educator. After

I learned about that lady in school, for several years I studied her life, hoping that, one day, I could rise to her level, to do and help our people reclaim their identity, regain their power, regain their freedom once again. Because we must admit that we lost that freedom.

13:58.71 Later, Jean-Jacques Dessalines chose a woman. Her name was Marie-Claire Heureuse Félicité Bonheur. I named my foundation after her, and that woman was an extraordinary woman with a life that is hard to qualify. Imagine going through slavery, experiencing all kinds of torture, and living up to the age of 110. That lady gave us what we call “soup joumou.” She used to heal people with plants. After our nation became independent, she pondered the type of food that could be used as medicine, that would help us stay alive despite not being able to eat daily. She also knew there wouldn’t be enough food for everyone every day, after our Independence Day. Well, she is the one who came up with the “soup Joumou.” She called it “Independence soup.” That soup is a combination of several vegetables, root vegetables, all prepared together. Her description of the recipe was very detailed; she gave a ton of directions. For instance, when you add the parsley bunch to the soup, you must lower the fire, because a bundle of parsley has 85,000 units of Vitamin A. If you add it to the fire, you kill them all. So you must lower the fire, or turn it off completely before you drop the parsley. Once you’ve dropped the parsley, you must close the pan with its lid, to make the parsley sweat. This way, the 85,000 units of Vitamin A will stay in your soup. She was an extraordinary woman, who learned to read and write.

16:00.85 The first person to purchase her as a slave was Michel Petit, a French painter and artist. He purchased her as a slave, and he brought her home. Everyone found her to be a beautiful woman, so everybody could see why he’d taken her home. After 2 or 3 days, he requested that the “thing” he’d purchased a few days before be brought up to him. As they got her ready to go see him, she was given instructions on how to proceed. Two women cleaned the dirt off her skin, because when you were going to the master, you had to be rubbed thoroughly and you were given new sheets to wrap around your body. They’d bring you to the master’s room, and they’d tell you: once you get in, put the sheet down, lie on your back, open your legs, and don’t cause the master any grief. She got in the room and she simply stood there. The master asked, “Didn’t they tell you what to do?” She said, “Yes.” He said, “Well?” She said, “If you want to know me, you will marry me.” He replied, “Ah, you must be out of your mind! I purchased you with my money. What are you talking about?” She said, “If you want this woman, you will marry her.” He chased her away.

17:23.60 One week after, he asked that they bring her again. They had the same conversation once more and, ultimately, he said: “Well, you know, I can’t marry you. The law will not allow a white man to marry a black woman.” She replied, “Yes. But, in the end, you always do what you want. You buy off two judges and you do it.” He bought off two judges and they married. So, what are the important lessons here? We must understand that there is no situation that will ever prevent us from choosing our own course of action. Only when you stop having faith in yourself, can others do anything they want to you! But the minute you know your worth, you can’t allow anything to happen to you. I believe this is the first lesson we learn from that woman. This was during slavery time: When a man bought you, you became his personal property and he could do whatever he wanted with you, and yet, imagine you stand up to him and say, “No! If you want to touch me, you must marry me.” He married her.

18:24.91 He was crazy about his wife. He wanted to offer her gifts, and asked her what he could do for her. She replied that if he wanted to please her, the one thing he could do was to buy her mother, to set her free. So he did. He then said, “Choose another gift! Choose another gift!” She said, “Well, buy my dad for me!” He purchased the dad. He said, “Choose another gift!”

She said, “No! I won’t choose anything else. I am free. My mom is free. My dad is free. They are with me. I don’t need anything else on this earth! I have enough.” People should recognize when they have enough. It’s the second big lesson that Marie-Claire Heureuse Félicité Bonheur gave us.

- 19:06.52 Note that when she married Dessalines, the same principles applied. When Dessalines asked her to marry him, she said *no* because marriage would have distracted her from her mission. “I am not getting married.” He said, “Do you know who you’re talking to? I’m the future liberator.” She said “Yes, I know you. You had a child with Marleine. You had a child with Jessica. You had two kids with Bayyinah...” He was taken aback. She said, “Anyway, if we were to get married, you would need to legitimize all of your kids—visit a notary and acknowledge your paternity. He said, “Oh, this is not a problem!” She said, “You must give the mothers money to raise the kids properly.” He said, “Well, I’d be taking it from what’s yours.” She said, “No problem. The kids are our future.” Indeed, they got married, and Dessalines kept his word: he went to the notary with the seven kids to acknowledge his paternity. And, later, Marie-Claire would take in four of the young girls, because their mothers could not take care of them—their family could not take care of them properly. So, she was the one who raised them.
- 20:22.40 That woman always stayed simple, always ready to be of service to the nation, even when she became Empress Félicité of Haiti. She said that a title is not important: it’s what you do for others that is important. (Apologies: there is a plane flying.) Back then, when someone was the wife of a general, everyone would also call her “General.” She said, “No! There is only one general in the family. It is Jean-Jacques. As for me, you can call me Claire, you can call me Marie, you can call me Claire Heureuse, you can call me Félicité. But don’t use the title ‘General.’” She would not accept that.
- 21:04.86 The Empress continued to serve the nation during the whole time she held that title. And when they announced that the Emperor had been killed, the first thing she did was to ask the treasurer to bring all the money available to her. They brought her the money, and she distributed it to all those with very small salaries. When officers asked her, “What about us?” she responded: “You always had a good salary. You can take care of yourself. But these people need help. The Emperor won’t be there to help them. They need the money to protect themselves.” She distributed that money and when all of it was gone, she took her jewelry, her silverware, all her expensive belongings, and that’s what she gave to a lot of people to help them survive after his death, after his assassination. So, Marie Claire Heureuse would do good to people for the rest of her life.
- 22:03.58 We have testimonies from people, including Frenchman Victor Schoelcher, who came to see her when she was about 92 or 93 years old. After visiting her, he shared how wonderful it was to visit that lady: he spoke of her youthful spirit, and her extraordinary intelligence. He admired her deeply. When Soulouque became Emperor Faustin the First, he invited Claire Heureuse, as the country’s first empress, to eat with him at the palace. Marie Claire Heureuse said, “No, I won’t come, because two years ago you condemned several young officers to death. I wrote to ask you to refrain from killing them, although they had wronged you. Punish them, I said, but don’t take their lives, because these kids are descendants of our independence heroes: the grandchild of Charles Belair, for instance, along with the grandchild of Toussaint, the grandchild of Dessalines, and others.” She named the twelve kids whose lives she’d asked him to spare. “I asked you and you did not do it. Now, I don’t want to hear from you. I don’t want to hear from someone who has the blood of the Founders on his hands.” So, she calmly responded to him, based on what she knew, what she understood. The Emperor insisted, until

he finally said, “I understand why you can’t come. You are 108 years old. It’s a long journey, so I’ll come to see you myself.”

23:44.87 He left Port-au-Prince to visit the Empress in Saint-Marc. Yet, when he arrived, the Empress kept all the doors and windows closed. She sat home singing. They knocked and knocked, but she never answered. One officer told the Emperor, “Well, that door does not seem to be too heavy. It’ll only take a few kicks to open it.” The Emperor said, “You don’t know that woman inside. Even if I were to come in with a battalion, she would refuse to greet me.” He removed his crown and put it in his gilded carriage. He took his horse and galloped back to Port-au-Prince. He didn’t stop anywhere else, even though he was expected in Gonaives and Saint-Marc. He didn’t go to any of those places. He finally understood who he was dealing with: Marie-Claire Heureuse.

24:36.56 When her time came to go, she asked a carpenter to build her a coffin, and when they brought it to her, she inscribed her name as follows: Marie-Claire Heureuse Félicité Bonheur, widow of Jean-Jacques Dessalines. She excluded any title. She had lived in simplicity all her life, and for that reason I admire her a lot. She set an amazing example as a first lady—like no other in this world. She was very simple, everything about her was simple. We must say that the Emperor and Empress had decided that they would not wear any crown, or any of the things that emperors typically do. Jean-Jacques Dessalines was in a plain military outfit when he went to the Cathedral to be crowned; he put on his own crown, with his own two hands. He was the first one to do this, before anyone else. So he and the Empress set an example: as leaders, they lived in great simplicity. The Emperor said it clearly: Spending a ton of money did not make sense when the people needed so many things. He needed to build a city and a school for the people, so he did not have time to buy anything like that. They set a beautiful example for us!

26:15.48 Marie-Louise Coidavid married General Christophe Henry. In many books, they’ve reversed his name. He is not Henry Christophe; he is Christophe Henry. His last name is Henry with a “Y,” please! All his documents are written the same way. When she married Henry (Christophe Henry), they had four kids: Fernand François Henry, Anne-Athénaire, Améthyste-Françoise, and Jacques-Victor Henry. Those were their four children. This woman lived an extraordinary life, but also a very painful one. As an empress, her outlook was different. Henry and his wife thought that since they’d been enslaved, there were many things that they could do—and that they could even surpass the expectations others had of black people. So they created a nobility, and they each had a crown.

27:27.12 The lady had twenty-one tiaras, all fully equipped. She owned inscribed silverware, and so on. People worried about how fancy she was, so during their reign, Queen Marie-Louise and King Christophe built more than 7 schools—I mean, 700 schools. More than 300 hospitals were built too, along with many universities. They established a new law: If a mother died, the child was now under the protection of the State. If a father died or became unavailable, the State would take over his role. Under their reign, the law stated that every child must go to school. And if the King ever saw a child in the streets during school hours, he stopped to ask the child about their parents. He then took the child with him in the carriage, bringing them back to their family. To the mother or the father, he said, “Listen, your child should be in school. Today, I found him in the street and took him back to you. But next time, the law will apply at 100%. The law does not authorize children that age not to be in school.” He was very strict about it.

28:58.63 This government also created a big literacy program, even within the army. If a soldier joined

the army and did not know how to read, they would hold on to the certificate until the person learned how to read. Only when you learned how to read did you receive your certificate. So he motivated the population and it led to a big improvement in literacy and education. We must also say that under their reign, the “gourde” currency was created. And Haiti was printing it. We also made gold coins, silver coins. At first, the gourde was manufactured in both gold and silver. That brought much abundance in the country, according to several of the articles that I read. Cap-Haïtien was better lit than London, than any city in Europe. We opened a university that taught mathematics, five foreign languages, astronomy, and music. Christophe believed that education was only effective when teacher were well trained, so school didn’t start in Kindergarten—the focus was to be on the university, to create effective instructors.

30:35.96 Queen Marie-Louise suffered a lot; there was a lot of good but also a lot of suffering. First of all, they sent their child, François Ferdinand, to study in France, at 9 years old. When the Haitian revolution started, Napoleon sent a message, stating that if they wanted to see their child again, that they should not take part to the revolution. The King replied, “My wife is beautiful. She is very sweet to me. We will make many more children.” Napoleon killed Little François Ferdinand. He killed him. François became our first martyr to die in France, at almost 11. Secondly, when the King’s reign was over, when Boyer’s troops came to the North, they arrested Prince Jacques-Victor, put him in prison, and, while he was in prison, they killed him. So, Queen Marie-Louise lost both her first and second child. After that, her husband was gone. Actually, the husband was the second to go, then her second child died next. When she left Haiti, she went to live in Italy. In Italy, her two daughters died. So she buried all four of her children and her husband. She died in Pise, Italy. All three of these ladies are buried in a cemetery of Pise.

32:12.62 Recently, I came across a piece of treasure! I found the Queen’s will. This document allows us to understand her thought process. She was disciplined, well organized. All her assets were well accounted for, and she left something to everyone who’d served and helped her, no exception—from the yard boy to the cleaning lady, to the cook. She left something for every single one of them. From her private assets. She had a very pronounced sense of justice, and she was very proud. Although I’d already had a pretty idea of who she was, I came to have a clearer picture. So we had a wonderful empress, a wonderful queen.

33:11.35 Let me see...who else should we talk about? Well, we had a lot of military women. Several military women were regular officers. For instance, let’s talk about Lieutenant Sanite Belair, Captain Guillemette Charlot, Lieutenant Pierrette Jolibois. There were many women who were regular officers in the army. Of course, some people will joke when you mention it; they’ll say that some men simply had female names. They refuse to accept the situation, and would rather twist it any way they can. So, Suzanne Simon Louverture... From what I learned, she did not have a particular rank. However, she was Toussaint’s wife and what became obvious, is that she knew how to read better than Toussaint. She was also more fluent in French than he was. Suzanne was an unofficial secretary; she had the responsibilities of the job, but no title. Whenever he came home with a ton of documents, Suzanne was the one writing and correcting the letters. She was the one doing a lot of work, but she didn’t get any credit for the work that she did to help Toussaint when he became governor, for instance.

34:46.82 Suzanne disagreed with Toussaint on many things. For example, she did not agree that they should live in the house that had been occupied by the former, white governor. Even though Toussaint was now the governor, she did not think it was right to live in the old home of a white colonist. If he wanted to build another house, fine, but it was not right to live in the old house of the former governor. This is how Suzanne felt about it. I must say that I noticed that

many of the ladies had some well-defined political opinions, and some specific ideas on how things should, or should not be done. I have a lot of admiration for Suzanne Simon Louverture.

35:30.59 And Suzanne also made another choice: She chose not to be involved in politics. When Toussaint attended political dinners or other events, she didn't go with him. "You can go alone to these things," she said. "I will stay home. I like to garden. I like to take care of my farm. I like farming and producing food. That's what I will be doing. You can go alone." Even when Toussaint moved to the castle at the governor's house, Suzanne did not move in with him. She let him move, and stayed home. Now when the tide turned and everything went south, they arrested Toussaint. Well, they came to Suzanne's house and arrested her as well. They took Suzanne, and all her children; they took their cousins and nephews... If they had found a dog, they would have arrested it as well. The French army arrested the whole family—everybody! They didn't need to know who you were, what you were guilty of... Your crime: you were related to Toussaint. Here is democracy for you!

36:34.03 Now, they put everybody on a boat to France. Napoleon gave the order: "Don't bother torturing Toussaint. He is a big general. He'll never speak. He'll never tell us what we need to know. However, his wife...now, here's a big woman with a ton of fat to spare. She's 425 pounds. There is no way she'll refuse to speak. So any torture you'd want to inflict on Toussaint, you can inflict on Suzanne instead. She will reveal to us what we need to know." Well, they were in for a big surprise. They did torture Suzanne. They broke all the joints in the woman's body. They pulled every single one of her toenail and fingernails. They tortured her at every possible level. She went into prison at 425 pounds. When she came out, she was 90 pounds. They subjected her to all sort of psychological torture as well. When bringing her food, they would tell her: "Today, you will be happy with the food, because we prepared the heart of Saint Jean for you." Saint Jean was her last child. "We prepared Saint Jean's liver for you. We prepared Saint Jean's arms for you." This was how they brought food to her in the prison. So she went through a very difficult and complex moment. She went through a lot. But, you know, although they tortured Suzanne to make her talk about where Toussaint had left his money (or where was this or that?), Suzanne only said one sentence in response: "I will never speak of my husband with my husband's executioners." She only said one sentence! "I will never speak of my husband with my husband's executioners." So, Suzanne never accepted to submit to any torture; she ate misery and pain, but she stayed strong.

38:25.87 Now, when France lost the war to England, England released some of its political prisoners, and Suzanne was freed from prison. You would think that England would've sent her to Haiti, since they knew where she was from...but England did not want to send her to Haiti. At some point, England took her from France and brought her to England. England's climate was very harsh on Suzanne. And there are many versions of how her story ended. Some say, based on written information from France, that she died in France, where she was getting a monthly 30-gourde pension or something like that...I can't remember! She died of breast cancer in that first version. In another version, England said, "No!" and took her to England. They took care of her there, but when they realized that the climate was unkind to her, she was taken to Jamaica. They could take her to Jamaica, but not to Haiti, the country she was from, where she had family, where she had friends, where people knew her. They wouldn't take her there. In any case, Suzanne died at around 70 years old. Although there are several versions, as far as the place and the way her life ended, all the versions are clear on the fact that she bravely endured torture. She gave us a lesson in courage, in determination: No matter what people do to you, you must take care of what needs to be taken care of.

- 40:06.10 Who else do we have? As far as our revolutionary ladies, we have Marie Sainte Dédée Bazile. She was not a first lady, but she was a prominent woman, one that you must get to know. They murdered Marie Sainte Dédée Bazile so many times in our history that people don't even know her name. When I say: Marie Sainte Dédée Bazile, crickets... But if I had said *Defilee La Folle*, you would all be able to identify clearly who I was referring to! She was a woman who worked in Dessalines's camp. She was head of supply, which meant that when Dessalines was out with 10,000 soldiers, Marie Sainte Dédée Bazile would be the one with money to cook for the 10,000 soldiers, to ensure that all the soldiers had soap to wash their clothes, that they had this or that, everything they needed. Marie Sainte Dédée Bazile had that responsibility. Please don't think we are referring to an easy cooking job! That is not true. During the war, finding food for 10,000 soldiers was no simple task. Going to the market was one thing, coming back with the food was a completely different ball game. If you didn't know how to shoot, if you didn't know your way around, if you didn't know how to defend yourself, you would not come back with anything. So, Marie Sainte Dédée Bazile was a prominent woman in many ways when it came to strategies that Jean-Jacques Dessalines was setting up.
- 41:40.55 That lady had another reputation: when Dédée was there, everyone was fed. There was no such thing as insufficient food for some of the soldiers. She did something extraordinary: Once, she went to Dessalines and told him: "Let me tell you one thing: When we cook food, and there's enough of it, everyone will get fed. But when there is not enough, the rule will be as follows: The soldiers will eat before the officers. I will start with the lowest rank—the soldiers—and then, if there is food left, you will be fed. You have the highest rank, so you shall be fed last." Dessalines said: "What? I've never heard of anything like this!" She replied, "Well, this is how it will be done from now on. Soldiers will be fed first, because if a soldier goes hungry, he has nowhere to go, and can't do anything about it. All he can do is stay in hunger, whereas leaders can rely on friends to invite them to dinner. They always get fed; therefore they should be the last ones to eat...if there is anything left. End of the conversation." So the general replied, "Yes, my general." And that's how this went. Exactly!
- 42:51.62 Therefore, Dédée had a highly developed sense of justice, when we think about the way Marie Sainte Dédée Bazile handled things. And this will show again strongly on the day Dessalines was killed. According to my research, the murderers had said that Dessalines should not be buried; the new leaders had said that Dessalines should not be buried. They cut him into small pieces, dropping pieces of him at various corners. Dédée said, "This cannot be so! Dessalines was an all-or-nothing type of man, he will not be buried in pieces! Over my dead body, maybe!" And that lady, a gun at her hip, put her skirt over her pants. She took off to collect pieces of his corpse. At each corner, she fought soldiers guarding pieces of the corpse. One soldier was watching to prevent anyone from picking up the pieces of the corpse that were spread around. She fought and disarmed the soldier, picked up pieces of the corpse, and told the soldier: "I will let you live. You can go, but I will keep your gun." And this is how it went.
- 44:02.01 Later, Placide Dauphin told her, "I will help you, but only in picking up the pieces, not in the fighting." She said, "Okay." Carrying a bag, she focused on identifying where best to fight each soldier. She disarmed them, because she said, "I don't want to mix Dessalines's blood with the blood of these filthy people." That's why she did not shoot. Although she had her gun with her, she didn't shoot the soldiers before walking up to the pieces of the corpse. Only after picking up the pieces of the corpse did she tell the soldier, "You can go, I will let you live." She was a woman who did big work.
- 44:40.09 If we look at the symbolic side of the work, here's what you see: Today, the Haitian people seem to have a lot of problems. We have lost our identity, and also our conscience. They took

our country's founder, tore him to pieces, spreading these pieces around, saying that hawks and dogs should eat them...If that lady hadn't stood up to everything faced, to pick up the pieces, to string them up, and make him whole, in order to bury him, today we don't know where we would be. Because when they cut founder to pieces, symbolically they did it to the people: they cut us to pieces. However, there is always a Dédée to pick up the pieces. That Dédée is still there, and she will pick us up again, and, no matter what, the Haitian people will be whole again, and we will work it all out. So I will never stop saying a big thank you to Dédée on behalf of all of us.

45:56.44 There is a queen that I have not spoken about yet: Queen Anacaona. We cannot deny the first people who were on that land. In fact, even the founder acknowledged on January 1st the first people who lived on the land, saying that the work he had done was first to avenge the natives for what had been done to them. He said they were also our ancestors, although he always said that he was African. He was visibly African: his mom had come from Africa; his dad had also come from Africa. In Africa, he'd been in his mother's womb, although he was born in Haiti. He was African, yes, but he recognized the legacy of those who'd been here: he ate what they planted, he walked on the land they'd occupied, so they were his ancestors too. As Dessalines's descendants, as part of the generation that followed the heroes and heroines, the phenomenal men and women who gave us this country, we must recognize that we also have native roots. We must respect and commemorate both lineages.

47:23.50 All that brings me to Queen Anacaona. The first thing to understand is that the government controlling the island—our enemies—wrote our history in such a way, that we were made to believe that there was no government on the island, that each native group was in isolation: Xaragua on this side, Maguana on the other...as if the 50 states in the United States of America don't have a central government. Is that so? So the five territories ("caciquats") would each have been an independent entity with nothing to do with the others. That is not true! They called their government a "crown" and the crown was always composed of five people. And the law stated that those five people should never be all women, and neither shall they ever be all men. There should be a mix of the two energies, whether it be a ratio of one to four, three to two, two to three...but it could never be five to one. So, as far as identifying the role of each individual, a system of justice defined the management of the nation. This system was already in place with the Arawaks and the Tainos, the Ciboney, Turpi. There was twelve different ethnic groups in addition to an African group also living on the island.

18:45.78 So there were thirteen groups of people. And once the crown was established, those groups had five leaders. And at the time of the Euro-Christian invasion, in 1492, that crown was composed of four men and one woman. In less than three years, all four men were killed. So this lady was the last one standing. She fought against them for 10 years; she did everything she could. Ovando told the Queen of Spain that militarily he had done everything possible to defeat Queen Anacaona, yet he had not succeeded. Even when they attacked a day before they'd planned, she still managed to beat them! She'd learned quickly how to operate their weapons, then she'd successfully trained her army. He stated that he refused to lose any more of his soldiers, so he was going to set a trap for her. He then offered the signing of a peace agreement, and you know how this story ends.

50:10.54 When the Queen agreed to meet him, he pretended to be there to sign a peace agreement, while his men hid, waiting for his signal to start killing everyone. He gave instructions to kill every living creature, to burn all trees and all animals they could catch—not only people. Among these people, twenty of them were taken. They took the Queen with 19 other people that they tied behind a horse to transport them to Santo Domingo, to judge them. Imagine:

everyone died on the way. Today, it takes a car 8 hours on an asphalt road to go from Yaguana (now Leogane) to Santo Domingo. It will take you about 8 to 9 hours. Now imagine doing it tied behind a horse, while the horse is dragging you on a dirt road, through stones, occasionally clinging to tree branches, crossing rivers, climbing and descending mountains.

- 51:21.07 The Queen managed to arrive alive, but according to eyewitnesses, when she did, she was all bones and blood. She barely had any skin or flesh left. Now the good Christians said they would judge the Queen, so they went to court. They accused her of betrayal against Spain. So you come to my country, you steal, you rape, and you kill, committing one crime after another, then you judge me for betrayal. (This mindset has not changed. Be careful! This mindset has not changed.) They judged the Queen and found her guilty. The next day, they hung her. The evening before that, a priest stopped by to let her know she had to convert. She asked, "Why would I convert?" He said, "Convert to go to paradise." She asked, "What would I do there?" He said, "Well, in paradise... God this, God that." She asked, "Are there any Spaniards in your paradise?" He replied, "Yes, there are Spaniards." She said, "No, I don't need that! You can keep it for yourself." The priest reported that she refused to convert. The trial assembled the same night, then they decided she would have two deaths, as if people could die twice: They were going to hang her and then burn her. This is exactly what they did.
- 53:00.76 She was a strong woman, who stood up to all attacks for more than 7 years, on her own. The attacks of the Euro-Christians. So you must understand the type of women we had for ancestors, the type of people we come from. So, nothing should scare us.
- 53:23.82 Let me see... Here is another phenomenal woman: Marie-Jeanne! Marie-Jeanne! Marie-Jeanne was of mixed-race, African and Taino, and she was a master of disguise and very talented at fighting. She had a crew of 1,000 women. There was no man in Marie-Jeanne's team, only women, 1,000 women leading the fight and, later on, she'll start a secret service to spy on what our enemies were planning, to share information with the general. If France was getting ready to send 20 boats with a specific number of soldiers to attack us, she'd readily share that information with Toussaint or Dessalines or whomever. They knew it all.
- 54:30.30 Marie-Jeanne's ladies could ensure safety. In the Battle of Crête-à-Pierrot, these ladies stood strong. Louis Daure Lamartinière, the leader of the army at that time, once got discouraged and wrote Dessalines a note saying, "Today is the day we die. We have not eaten in several days. We have nothing to drink. We have no weapons, no ammunition. Everything is over; there is no hope. We're done. There is nothing else to do." Dessalines called Marie-Jeanne to say, "Look at what your husband told us. He said this and that." The lady replied, "That's nothing. Even a good soldier can be discouraged at some point. Now we must seek a way to reach and enter Crête-à-Pierrot, to give them strength." Dessalines replied, "Crête-à-Pierrot? No way! 12,000 French soldiers are surrounding it. Those inside there can't do anything, yet you are asking me to go there? How would I possibly do that?" She said, "Yes, you must get in. You are the only one who can convince them to stand strong." And so he did it. But one thing I am sure of: it was not General Dessalines who entered there; it was probably "Miss" Dessalines or whoever Marie-Jeanne was able to transform him into. If General Dessalines had gone alone, he would've have made it very far. He wouldn't have been able to get inside.
- 55:50.61 So that lady was very skilled at disguise—at make-up and transformation. She must've transformed him into an older man or whatever; she transformed him somehow, so they could go through the French troops and access Crête-à-Pierrot. When he arrived, he gave a big speech on that day, March 22, 1802. Dessalines said, "Listen closely to what I am about to tell you. Listen! Listen closely and pay attention. Even if you saw Dessalines submit to French

authorities, you can be certain (100 times! 100 times!), I will betray them! The entire universe will take part to the battle. Nature will send us rain, rain will bring fever, and the fever will strike the French army, diminishing the number of soldiers facing us. Sometimes we will be hiding, but sometimes we will be fighting. But here is one last step: When we go down the mountains, like a thunderstorm, we will strike the French army and they will have to leave us the land. That day, I promise to you, I will give you Independence.”

57:03.12 March 22, 1802. So saying that our Independence came out of nowhere would be false. It was well organized and well structured. We had done good work, And Marie-Jeanne was a key player in the battle of Crête-à-Pierrot. When Dessalines was done encouraging his troops, he said, “I will see if I can find more soldiers to come help you and serve as reinforcement. If I can’t find any, I will send you that ring. If you see the ring, it means you’ll need to handle things on your own. Well, when he sent the ring to them, Marie-Jeanne took some of her ladies with her to Crête-à-Pierrot to join the soldiers, and she is the one who set a plan, which allowed the men to leave Crête-à-Pierrot to cross the French troops. Although they lost a few people, more than 300 of them (they were about 600 initially), more than 300 soldiers came out alive. And those soldiers were proud. When you’d ask: “Who’s at the door?” they’d reply, “A soldier from Crête-à-Pierrot.” This information was enough—there was no need to ask for a name; people would simply open the door to let him in—or let her in, because both genders had been at the fight.

58:28.77 Marie-Jeanne became a prominent person after Independence. She had character. Lamartinière asked her multiple times to marry him, and she said, “No, we must build the country first. After that, we will build our family. We must think of the country now. We don’t currently have the energy to invest into a family.” So, this lady refused a marriage proposal while fighting to create her country. Before we became independent, unfortunately, Lamartinière died; he died 2 to 3 months before the battle of Vertières, which took place in November. So he did not live to see our Declaration of Independence.

59:09.56 Marie-Jeanne continued her work and grew her spying business. At some point, Marie-Jeanne had more than 2,000 spies working for her throughout the globe, anywhere someone could be planning something against Haiti. Marie-Jeanne was made aware of all plans. We could say she was the one who created the first C.I.A, the first F.B.I. Marie-Jeanne was a phenomenal woman with a big job: to protect the nation. There is a saying in our language. When Haitian say, “Who do you think you are? You think you are a Marie-Jeanne?” Well, it’s because of Marie-Jeanne. Dessalines said that, every time he invited her to join the regular army, she would decline. Every time he told her, “You should join the army. You are always working with us. Go ahead and join the army.” She replied, “I want a separate troop.” Dessalines asked her one last time, and she said, “No.” He said, “I am glad this lady doesn’t want to be in the army. Because if she got in the army, we’d have to give her a rank higher than mine. Every time we meet with the generals, all the generals say they don’t know what should be done. Once Marie-Jeanne is called, she always has a solution. So Marie-Jeanne would need a rank higher than mine. So I’m glad she is not in the army. Leave it alone.” So you see the type of woman she was.

01:41.48 Exactly one year after Dessalines’s death (according to eyewitness reports from L’Artibonite, Gonaives, and Gros Morne, where people spoke about it a lot), Marie-Jeanne had a big party, a big reunion, and she told everyone that she’d been assigned to Dessalines’s safety. Since Dessalines had died, she should no longer be on this earth. Then she danced and danced, she served people...and one moment later she started spinning. She spun and spun, then she started going up, up and up, until she was never seen again.

01:01:29.00 We had phenomenal women in our country, thank you. Big spirit, big potential—all of them. And remember this when reading about history. Don't think it's *their* history. Think: it's *my* history. It's the way to look at it. All the strength that we are admiring, you must know that this strength is in you. Do some energy cleansing, accept yourself, receive your power, to handle your situation, the way they handled theirs.

MJ FIEVRE

01:01:59 *Wz!* Well said! I don't know if Marleine has a question. Marleine, would you like to ask Bayyinah a question?

MARLEINE BASTIEN

01:02:17.48 I know she already shared a lot of information. I have questions. When I listen to Bayyinah, I get goose bumps. *O, Seyè!* I feel my head is so... It's like energy is getting everywhere into my pores. I don't know where to start. My God, Bayyinah! Well, Bayyinah is not only an icon but when I listen to her, I see... When I am listening to you, it seems like I could listen to you for years. She is a historical monument. I could say more, but I know we don't have a lot of time, and I have a question that I would like to ask Bayyinah. *O, Seyè! Se youn gwo kado!* A beautiful gift! A beautiful gift! Today, while we live through this time of the pandemic, when we look at the number of people who died... I personally, Jessica and Bayyinah, have lost people dear to my heart—people who trained me when I first arrived in the United States in 1981, pioneers in the community. I lost six of them. Sometimes, you wonder: Where are we going? And in the midst of this pandemic, we have the Black Lives Matter movement, where a lot of people might have lost their way. They used to think that the United States was a country where people could live completely free. And after Georges Floyd's death... (I don't know if it's after Georges Floyd, but after many of those cases), everyone started asking questions; they realized that this country was not as free as it seemed to be—racism in the United States still exists. But the worst, the most demoralizing is that lately, I hear a lot of young people, saying: “Why should we fight? Whether we fight or not, we get the same result. Look at Martin Luther King, look at Malcolm X. Look at the people who died. Look at what's going on today. Why should we fight?”

01:04:28.61 And then I'm listening to Bayyinah Bello, a monument, a historian, telling us about Félicité Bonheur, Marie-Claire Heureuse Félicité Bonheur, and I would like to say to Bayyinah: For the last 20 years, FANM (especially after your visit, which inspired us)...FANM started awarding an honorary plaque every year, at our annual event honoring men and women: the Marie-Claire Heureuse Leadership Award. After we had learned so much from you, after you'd come to speak at our event, we thought we knew so much... and now, I realize, while listening to you, brave woman, that we don't know anything yet. There is a whole lot more to learn. So the question I have...(I could say more, I feel inspired to say more, but we don't have a lot of time.) The question I have: When you talked about Marie-Claire Heureuse Félicité Bonheur, you said that when we need to accomplish something, no matter how many barriers, how many painful obstacles are on your way, you can still accomplish our goal. When I listen to you, I get the impression of a woman...(well, it's not an impression, she was an avant-gardist woman, no?) but when I hear you, it's as if that woman could have been living in current times. What is the message, Bayyinah—especially nowadays, for the youth in Haiti where so many

young people are killed, where leaders are killed, where young men and women seem to have no hope; or for the youth I met in San Diego, California, these young people who were struggling in Mexico, and are now facing all types of challenging situations in the United States. Let's bring Marie-Claire Heureuse into our present time. If we were talking to these young people, whether in Haiti, where there seems to be no hope, whether in the United States, where some of the youth thought they were living in the most democratic place in the world, only to realize things were not as they seemed, that they were fooled by an illusion... That's exactly right. If Marie-Claire Heureuse was speaking to those young people, what would she tell them, she, a woman who resisted so much. They brought her as a slave for sex, asking her to open her legs for the master. Yet, she said, "No."

BAYYINAH BELLO

01:07:14.56 Well, at the core of all this is: You must know yourself! When you know who you are, it doesn't matter whether you're before a king or a queen, you are powerful. As a people, it is the first thing we lost: that knowledge. In Africa, they tell you that every life is a life, there is no life worth more than another. So, once you enter a system that states that a "Jessica" is superior than a "Bayyinah," well, once it goes into my head, it's over. Jessica could be made of paper, because of the system telling me that Jessica is powerful, as soon as Jessica looks at me, I will fall. So this is the root of our situation here: we forgot that we are powerful, each person, each form of life.

01:08:13.03 When an ant fights an elephant, who wins? The ant wins. You will wonder how that can be. Well, it's very simple knowledge. The ant is clearly a very small animal, with absolutely no strength. It's very clear! Now, because he doesn't have any strength, he studies all the big animals nearby, and when he studies the elephant, well, he realizes that there is one place an elephant cannot touch: its internal ears. Then the ants climb on the elephant, millions of them enter its ear canals; they start stinging in the elephant's ears, and the elephant goes crazy running around left and right, hitting his ears against the first big tree he sees. He cracks his head open, and the ants will have food for centuries. It's two things: knowing your worth, and knowing what surrounds you. When you know yourself, and you also know your environment, you won't be fooled by an illusion. That's it!

MARLEINE BASTIEN

01:09:27.68 I have other questions... Do you have a question, Jessica? I don't know if you have one, but I have two more questions. I was going to ask them all together.

01:09:38.38 One question, I'd like to ask: All the ladies were extraordinary, but when you spoke about Marie-Louise Coidavid, you mentioned the importance of educating our children. And in the United States, we recently received, a few years ago, an African-American group who was assessing why, despite their efforts, African Americans were always in terrible situations. And these instructors, scientists, university professors, they all said, "Look at the Jewish community. One of the important things they have done, that we must learn from them is, they are the ones educating their children, and through this education, not only do they educate them on books, history, literature, and others, but there is an important element included in the education; it's the cultural factor, the history and culture."

01:10:43.00 So the question that I would like to ask, Bayyinah... or at least one of the questions: When you look at Haiti and the United States today... Well, if you consider education in Haiti, even today, after more than 200 years, only very few families can afford the luxury of putting the kids to school. And here in the United States, while education is within our reach, we also see where we are today. So for the youth watching this program... What could you tell parents and young people watching the program about developing a structure to educate our people, whether in Haiti or the United States?

01:11:25.60 And the last question: We looked at the Haitian revolution, and while I was listening to you, it became clear (well, it was clear before, but now even more so) that if it hadn't been for the women, that revolution would not have been possible. Now, when I look at Haiti today, as an example, (and even the United States, which is the most powerful country in the world), women in Haiti are not represented in decision making spaces. Although the United States is the biggest country in the world, when you look at Congress, women are not even represented at 50 %. And it's proven that in the space where the families are represented at more than 50%, those societies are more advanced. What message would you have for us today, for the people and the youth?

BAYYINAH BELLO

01:12:15.24 The message, again, is: you must know yourself. If I don't know myself, I don't know anything. I could get 20 degrees in 55 fields. I could get 1000 degrees in 42 fields, as long as I don't know myself, I won't have the necessary foundation to learn. Knowledge won't stick. I can quote people's words, I can recite people's books, but what do I know? I don't know anything. So, this is the first thing to understand: you cannot copy education. If it's an education, it must be yours. The French education system produces French citizens. When I study in France, I become a French citizen. I react as a French citizen, I love French things, I want to eat France dishes. I love French desserts and French bread—like the French do. This is what French education gives me. If I study in England, I become a British subject. (I won't be a citizen, beware! It's two different things. France produces citizens; England produces subjects.) I might not be able to afford food in England, but despite my 1,000 problems and my struggles to find the bare minimum to feed me, if someone starts speaking about the jewels of the Queen's crown (and "Oh, she has a ring worth 14 million"), I will find it beautiful! Because it's the Queen, so she must have it. I am trained to react this way. The system I live in says: this is how a real Queen should walk; it's okay for me to be starving; this is how it is. So the system that you are in trains you. It trains you according to the choices of the system's decision-makers. As long as we don't understand that if we are Haitian...

01:14:35.65 Let me give you a very simple example: An ambassador from the United States or from France spends 3 to 4 years in Haiti. When that person goes back, (s)he must go to a school to ensure that, during the time spent in Haiti, the Haitian culture did not disturb what was already programmed. In your case, however, you spent 20 to 40 years in a foreign country, and you end up as the prime minister of Haiti. What do you know about Haiti? What do you know about the country's reality? Nothing! And now you're president? You can even be king—it doesn't matter that there are no royals there! That's not a problem at all. Because as soon as foreigners decide that it's the right thing, they will place you there. Anything goes. That's why they disrespect the Constitution as they wish, because it's not the Haitian system that chooses how things will happen. So, to make the necessary adjustments, the first thing is to educate our children according to our culture. If the child understands well, for example... When I'm

talking to Haitians, I might say: *Map degaje m kou mèt Jan-Jak pou regle sa pou ou.* (“Just like Jean-Jacques, I am going to figure out how to fix this situation for you.”) Yes, it’s a proverb, but it’s not just a proverb. Mèt Jan-Jak is the man who brought freedom to our country. So that’s why this Haitian proverb says, “I am going to figure out how to fix this situation the way Mèt Jan-Jak would.” It means I will make it happen no matter what, just like Dessalines did. But if in France, I say, “Mèt Jan-Jak,” they ask who Mèt Jan-Jak is. There is no way any French person would imagine that I am referring to Jean-Jacques Dessalines. Earlier, we used another proverb, *“Sa ou konprann ou ye?”* Do you think you’re a Marie-Jeanne?” Marie-Jeanne is a woman who believes there is no problem on this earth. “What is the problem? Tell me the problem, I will give you its solution.” That is the type of person a “Marie-Jeanne” is, so when you make a suggestion and people around you cannot process the solution you shared, they will ask you whether you think you are a Marie-Jeanne. None of them can process your suggestion. You see? But if we had our own educational system...And we did for a while...

01:17:03.46 It’s the same for African Americans. When African Americans were in the South, they created their own educational system. They would have progressed, but the leaders soon realized, “If we let this go, those black people will take over our country.” This was partly the reason for integration. With integration, everyone had to attend a school, according to the white man’s statement. So as long as you focus on the white man’s statement, you are not close to being free. Yes, we can make any move, but, for me, the serious one is one that says: “I must know myself as a black woman, as a black Haitian woman.” It’s the first thing I need to know. I must know all that is mine: my food, my language, my clothing. I must know all that’s mine! Does it mean I will never wear anything else? No! Whenever I want to dress like a British, I can do it. But I know why I dress like a British, I know my agenda for doing it. I can wear German, Russian, or African clothes, whatever I want! Because I know myself.

01:18:12.49 But when I don’t know myself, and I follow what others present as trendy, if I focus on the trendy, I am a big idiot! I am an idiot, no matter how many diplomas I have. That’s what we must understand. A diploma from the enemy’s school does not make you smart, it only prepares you to submit to everything the enemy tells you, to see it as right, that what you need to understand. Your second question is linked to education. The situation is the same for both Haiti and the United States. Secondly, the absence of women in decision-making space has been the reality in Egypt since the third-century. In Asaba, a country near Ethiopia, they decided (more than 4,000 years ago) never to use a man as a leader again, because when a woman is leading the country, she has a special ability to will the small to evolve and grow. She has a special ability. She does not need everyone rich and powerful to befriend her, she is already number one, so she doesn’t need friends. So it’s the people that she is trying to lift to broaden the base of power and abundance in the country. For the same reason, women are trusted to ensure the safety of leaders, because they say, psychologically, when you tell a woman she is in charge of a leader’s safety, he becomes her baby. You would have to kill her before you touch him. But if it’s a man in charge, the going gets tough, everyone is looking to protect themselves. And if you watch the movie about Kennedy’s death, you will realize how true it is.

01:20:15.94 So this has existed for years, Africa has existed, has a history of over 30,000 to 40,000 years, all these lessons are there for us. We are the ones not learning them. We must learn them, know them, and we must apply them. Now to give you one last example: During the pandemic, someone made a painting that showed how all the European countries led by a woman treated the situation better than the ones led by a man. [...] And in many of the countries with women leaders, these ladies decided...the government took a decision: everyone would get a pay cut to add money to help the population get out of this situation. There is no government led by

a man that had done the same, so all the elements are right before us. We must face them and take the necessary decisions. We can't keep burying our heads in the sand, getting fooled by an illusion, accepting any sorry excuse they give us. No! It cannot be like that. So the first battle, the first revolution must start in our brain. The first revolution. You change your mindset, then you can stand strong in the battle. You pick up your load because everyone cannot do everything. Each person has a responsibility: you take your load, and you manage to carry it.

MJ FIEVRE

01:21:58.91 Thank you Bayyinah! Well said! So, if we wanted to know more about the ladies, about those phenomenal women, where can we go? Where can we find your book, Bayyinah, *Sheroes of the Haitian Revolution*?

BAYYINAH BELLO

01:22:19.18 Well, you can always contact my organization, Marie-Claire Heureuse Félicité Bonheur Dessalines. The Marie-Claire Heureuse organization created seminars. Some seminars were built to help you know yourself, some seminars can teach you your history. We have different seminars for different needs. We are preparing one now, a workshop to learn who Dessalines was, and we will have a workshop to teach you about the ladies of our history. In general, when we travel, we agree to do conferences. However, we prefer to do workshops where we can to actually transmit information for a person to process and work with immediately after the seminar.

MJ FIEVRE

01:23:07.98 Thank you very much, Bayyinah.

[...]

MARLEINE BASTIEN

I would like to thank Miami Book Fair International and we will also thank Jessica, our leader, who played such an important role. Connecting is so important. Thank you, Bayyinah, a woman of great courage. I don't know where you get this strength. We will ask God to continue to inspire you, no matter where He is, nou swete lap kenbe w, kèlkeswa kote Li ye a, pou l gide w. [...] Thank you very much, Bayyinah!