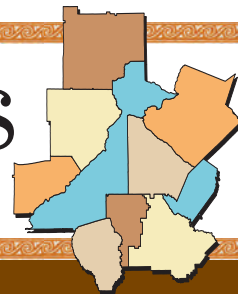


GLOBAL ATLANTA SnapSHOTS

A LOOK AT ETHNIC COMMUNITIES IN THE ATLANTA REGION



H A I T I a n s

Global Atlanta Snapshots, a component of the Atlanta Regional Commission's Global Atlanta Works program, help foster understanding among the rich ethnic and cultural diversity across the Atlanta region. Members of Atlanta's ethnic communities are recent arrivals or long-time residents and may have cultures and customs different from others in the region. But what they share with others who call the region home is that they all contribute to its success. Global Atlanta Snapshots introduce ethnic communities by exploring their backgrounds, customs and cultures, documenting their roles in the regional economy and highlighting available resources.



Who are the Haitian-Americans?

Haiti occupies the western one-third of the island of Hispaniola, which it shares with the Dominican Republic. Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Wracked by political turmoil and economic travails almost continuously since its independence in 1804, these problems are behind the ongoing migration of Haitians to the United States, Canada and other points abroad.

After the discovery of Hispaniola by Christopher Columbus in 1492, the island became a Spanish colony. In the 16th century, Spain began importing slaves from Africa to work on the island's mines, and later the sugar plantations. The colony subsequently came under French control. A slave rebellion in 1791, led by Toussaint Louverture, Haiti's national hero, sparked the 13-year Haitian Revolution that culminated in Haiti's independence from colonial rule on Jan. 1, 1804.

About 95 percent of Haiti's current population of eight million descended from African slaves. The remaining population consists

mostly of mixed Caucasian-African ancestry, with some smaller populations of European or Syrian heritage. The largest urban settlement is the capital city of Port-au-Prince, with an estimated 2.5 million inhabitants in the city and surrounding region. About two thirds of the population lives in rural areas.

After independence in 1804, Haiti's black population rose up against their colonial masters and took revenge on most of the remaining white inhabitants. In the ensuing years, the new republic's economy and infrastructure – the plantations, sugar mills, irrigation works and roads – fell into ruins. Continuing political turmoil curtailed economic revival for the next 150 years.

Growing concerns about instability in Haiti in 1919 led President Woodrow Wilson to dispatch a contingent of U.S. Marines. U. S. military occupation lasted until 1934 and is remembered by Haitians living through that period as one marked by racism on the part of the Americans. After another period of ineffective Haitian rule, hopes were raised in 1957 when Dr. François Duvalier, a physician, was elected president. But "Papa Doc" soon revealed himself as a ruthless dictator, maintaining his tight control with his murderous militia, the Tonton Macoutes. Duvalier named his 19-year-old son, Jean-Claude, his successor shortly before the elder Duvalier's death in 1971. "Baby Doc" brought little relief to the beleaguered Haitian people, and he and his family were eventually forced into exile in Paris in 1986.

In addition to these continuing political and economic travails, Haiti became a flashpoint in the world's confrontation with a deadly new disease. As the general public began to come aware of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, or AIDS, an early cluster of the disease was associated with people living in Haiti or travelers to Haiti. Because of the high incidence of AIDS among Haitian immigrants, in 1982 the U.S. Center for Disease

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A PERSONAL STORY

Joseph Alfred was born in Ounaminthe, a town in rural northeastern Haiti, and migrated to the U.S. with one of his sisters in 1984. They first landed in Miami, but moved to Tampa in 1994 where Alfred later received a master's degree from the University of South Florida. He moved to Atlanta in 1997 and began a teaching career in the Atlanta Public School system.

Before settling in Atlanta, Alfred scouted the community and attended the Caribbean festival in May 1997. Alfred found the area cosmopolitan, yet quite different from Miami and Tampa. Today, Alfred is both an educator and a leader in the local Haitian community. He serves as chair of the World Languages Department at Avondale High School in Avondale Estates and coaches the school's varsity soccer team.

Beyond his professional career, Alfred is strongly motivated to strengthen the ties between the local Haitian population and other Haitian communities across the U.S. His priorities include improving the job training new immigrants receive and developing a community center. His work led him to start Haitian Community Relations, Inc., which he currently serves as CEO.

Alfred was the principal organizer of the Atlanta Convention for Haitians in America, a June 2004 convention in Atlanta at the Auburn Avenue Research Library on African-American Culture and History. The gathering linked Haitian nationals, organizations and highlighted Haitian contributions in the U.S.



Alfred, who is single, maintains ties with his immediate family, who are spread from the Caribbean to Canada. His mother and one brother still live in Haiti, while his three sisters live in a Miami suburb that consists mostly of Haitian immigrants. Another brother resides in Montreal and is the first Haitian elected Deputy in Canada.

Although Alfred would like to promote tourism to Haiti, he doesn't travel there often. His last visit was in 2003 to attend the ordination of his brother as a Catholic priest. Since most of his family is now clustered in Miami, he tends to visit his relatives there. When he is back in Haiti, Alfred says it feels like home. But when asked if he misses Haiti, he shrugs and says, "We live Haiti everywhere."

Haitian Life in Metro Atlanta

The Haitian community in the Atlanta region can be defined, through 2000 U.S. Census data, either by counting those born in Haiti (about 4,400 individuals in the 10-county region) or those who trace their ancestry to Haiti. The latter group includes the children born in America of Haitian parents as well as those U.S. natives with more distant Haitian lineage. Using this broader

definition, there were nearly 6,300 persons of Haitian ancestry living in the area, a number that rose to nearly 7,000 by 2004. Some community leaders argue that if undocumented immigrants were counted, the Haitian population would jump to 30,000.

Persons of Haitian ancestry are concentrated in three counties in metro Atlanta: Cobb (1,867 residents of Haitian ancestry), DeKalb (1,436) and Fulton (1,138). These three counties account for 75 percent of the region's Haitian population. Smaller numbers of Haitians are also found living in Gwinnett (766) and Clayton (689).

The Haitian community lacks a critical mass of businesses. But one commercial area that serves as a gathering place is the Marché des Caraïbes (Caribbean Market) in a Moreland Avenue shopping center. Another Haitian business is the Bistro Creole, a Lawrenceville restaurant featuring Haitian cuisine.

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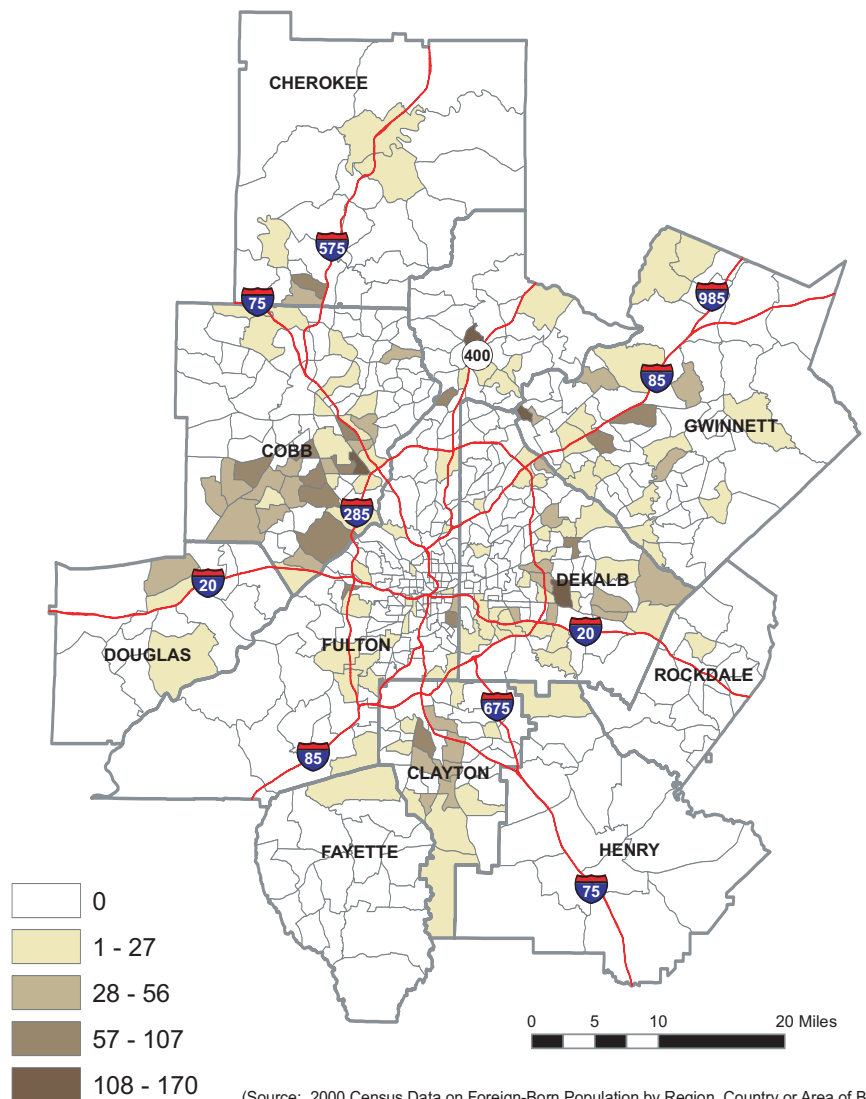
By the Numbers: Haitians in the Atlanta Region

Cherokee: 145	Clayton: 480
Cobb: 1,376	DeKalb: 913
Douglas: 62	Fayette: 20
Fulton: 723	Gwinnett: 632
Henry: 24	Rockdale: 12

Total 10-county Region: 4,387

- **Cobb County** is home to the largest population of Haitians (1,376). This is **by far the largest concentration** of persons born in Haiti. **DeKalb** is **second** (1,225).
- **Cobb County** is home to **31 percent** of the Haitian-born in the Atlanta region and **28 percent** of the Haitian-born living in Georgia.
- The 10-county Atlanta region is home to approximately **42 percent of Georgia's total population**, but represents **89 percent of the state's Haitian-born population**.

HAITIAN POPULATION IN ATLANTA Atlanta Region, 2000



(Source: 2000 Census Data on Foreign-Born Population by Region, Country or Area of Birth)

“HAITIAN CULTURE FEATURES A CLOSE CONNECTION TO SPIRITUALITY WITH THE CHURCH SERVING AS A VITAL LINK BETWEEN HAITIANS LIVING IN ATLANTA AND THEIR ISLAND HOME.”

Celebrated Holidays

In addition to other Western holidays, Haitians may celebrate the following:

Independence Day

Jan. 1

Flag Day

May 18

Atlanta Caribbean Folk Festival

Last week in May



Who are the Haitian-Americans? (continued)

Control & Prevention (CDC) identified Haitians as a high risk group for the disease. As medical information about AIDS improved, the CDC rescinded that action in 1985.

In 1990, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, a Roman Catholic priest, became Haiti's first democratically elected president. But the democratic experiment was short lived, as Aristide was overthrown in 1991. In the aftermath of the military coup, thousands of Aristide's followers set out for Florida in a flotilla of small boats. But U.S. officials denied the refugees entry and returned them to Haiti. Some Americans were supportive, admitting the refugees as immigrants; others denying entry over concerns about the costs of resettlement. In 1994, U.S. troops were again sent to Haiti to stop the ongoing bloodshed, to restore Aristide to power and to ensure peaceful transition to democratic government. Aristide was last returned to office in 2001, only to be removed in another coup in

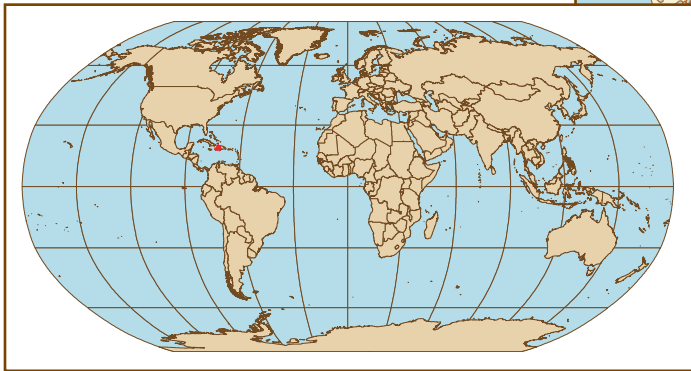
2004. In February 2006, René Préval, former protégé of Aristide, was democratically elected president. Préval also led Haiti from 1996 to 2001 after Aristide was ousted. Though the challenge of resolving Haiti's economic distress and political uncertainty continues, Préval pledges to engage all sectors, including international supporters, to restore stability to Haiti.

With this background, Haitians have been migrating to the U.S. in a series of waves over the past two decades. Many initially settled in other parts of the country, notably New York City, New Jersey, Boston and south Florida. While some migrated directly to Atlanta, most were part of secondary migrations from those initial settlements. Atlanta's warmer climate and better employment opportunities attracted the migrants from their original settlements.

Haitians in the Atlanta Economy

Haitians who came to the Atlanta region prior to Sept. 11, 2001 were typically highly educated and arrived with specific job transfers. After the terrorist attacks, a new wave of immigrants arrived responding to reports of employment opportunities in the region. But the new wave of Haitians, a mix of legal and illegal immigrants, are typically unskilled and often find employment as maids, janitors or other low-paying jobs.

Data from the 2000 U.S. Census on employment reflects the pre-Sept. 11 status of the Haitian workforce in metro Atlanta. The workforce numbered about 2,700, equally divided between men and women. The leading occupations among the men included sales and office occupations (28%), management and professional (24%) and service occupations (15%). Women were more highly concentrated in these white collar and service jobs. Leading occupations included sales and office occupations (33%), service occupations, including healthcare support occupations (29%), and management and professional occupations (28%).



A Primer on Haitian Customs and Culture



Virtually all Haitians speak Kreyol, or Haitian Creole, a language derived from French and influenced by English, Spanish, African dialects and other Caribbean tongues. Only about 10 percent of the

Haitian population is also fluent in French. Those who speak French are more likely to be well educated, urban elites, often descendants of Haiti's mixed-European-African families, or mulattos.

Religious life is also more complex in Haitian culture than in most communities. While an estimated 80 percent are Roman Catholics, most others are Protestants. But Haitians also profess a belief in Vodun, also known as Voodoo. Vodun is a mixture of African tribal religions and Christianity. Its adherents try to remain in harmony with the spirits, or lwa.

The Haitian people have a rich oral tradition, expressing their heritage through a wide range of stories, proverbs, riddles and songs. Haitian storytelling is ritualistic and effective storytellers employ their acting skills in a sort of performance art. Among the favorite characters in Haitian folk stories are

Uncle Bouki, an archetypal country bumpkin, and Ti Malis, a trickster who forever is taking advantage of Bouki.

While Haiti has produced some writers, poets and essayists of wide renown, until recently Haitian literature was available only in French. It was not until 1975 that the first novel written in Haitian Creole, "Dezafi" by Franktienne, was published in that language. The novel is a poetic depiction of Haitian life.

Haitian culture survived, even thrived, throughout the country's turbulent history. In the visual arts, both trained and unschooled, or primitive, Haitian painters made their impact in the international art world with expressive works exhibiting freshness, spontaneity and exuberant joy. Common themes in the folk painting include Haiti's history since the 18th century slave uprising, as well as scenes relating to nature, daily life and the practice of Vodun.

Haiti's unique culture is also expressed in its music, often a blend of African drum rhythms and European dance motifs. Dance and music are an important part of the annual Haitian Mardi Gras, or Carnival, celebration that typically involves bands, masked dancers, elaborate costumes and dance moves requiring great agility. The annual Atlanta Caribbean Folk Festival, organized by the wider Caribbean community, often attracts local Haitians.

Haitian Life in Metro Atlanta (continued)

The lack of a community center is a concern among Haitian community activists. "What we need is to have a Haitian cultural and information center that will be able to provide services to unskilled immigrants such as job hunting and housing," said Joe Alfred, a Haitian immigrant and founder and CEO of the nonprofit Haitian Community Relations. Alfred also suggests that while the word "center" denotes "poor" to some Haitians, a "cultural and information center" rings different. An information center would include information about Haitian churches and organizations. It is a place where immigrants can receive services and information on their culture, history, books and papers on Haiti. It would also be a place to promote tourism and encourage people to visit Haiti.

According to Alfred, the strength of the Haitian community in Atlanta is their level of participation in cultural events. "We need to move away from one-time events to developing a tradition," he said. And, Alfred added, Haitians should be more inclusive of the broader Atlanta community and become more politically active by registering to vote. "Having a high number of Haitian voters in a zip code means that voters can make demands including addressing Haitian issues," Alfred said.

Haitian culture features a close connection to spirituality with the church serving as a vital link between Haitians living in Atlanta and their island homeland. A recent report prepared for the Trinity College Haiti Program (www.haiti-usa.org/modern/atlanta) indicates a wide array of local churches serving local Haitians, including 19 Protestant churches, five Adventist churches and one Catholic church. The weekly Haitian mass at the Catholic Church of the Sts. Peter and Paul in Decatur is well attended. While focused on their religious role, the churches also are filling the gaps in meeting other community needs with outreach services.

Others have been trying to build networks of support. These include the Haitian American Coalition for Economic Empowerment located in Tucker, and Serge Declama and his wife, Marie Chantele, who maintain a web site, www.ahadonline.org, and publish occasional newsletters to communicate with other Haitians. Other institutions have formed, either in response to a particular crisis or to continuing community needs. The Haitian American Center for Business and Economic Development (HACBED) formed in 2002 when a boatload of Haitian migrants to Miami was detained.



Haitian Organizations, Associations and Resources

Below is a listing of selected organizations who work with the Haitian Community.
Additional resources are available at www.atlantaregional.com.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Association for Haitian American Development

P. O. Box 158
Atlanta, GA 30009-0158
Contact: Serge Declama, President
404-510-5581
e-mail: president@ahadOnline.org
www.ahadonline.org

Haitian American Coalition for Economic Empowerment

6414 Lawrenceville Highway
Tucker, GA 30084
Contact: Junio J. Abraham, Sr., President
770-934-3430
e-mail: juniojao1@yahoo.com or
j_a@hotmail.com
Mailing Address:
P. O. Box 958094
Duluth, GA 30095

Haitian Community Relations, Inc.

P.O. Box 1022
Douglasville, GA 30133
Contact: Joseph Alfred, CEO
770-262-6621
e-mail: joe_alfred@yahoo.com

BUSINESS

Bistro Creole

722 Collins Hill Road NW
Lawrenceville, GA 30045
770-339-0057
e-mail: info@bistrocreole.com
www.bistrocreole.com

Marché des Caraïbes

(Caribbean Market)
1352 Moreland Ave SE
Atlanta, GA 30316
404-622-4252

RELIGIOUS

Saints Peter & Paul Catholic Church

2560 Tilson Road
Decatur, GA 30032
404-241-5862

Good Samaritan Haitian Alliance Church

1781 Dresden Drive NE
Atlanta, GA 30319
404-248-1030

Contact: Order printed copies from the ARC Information Center at 404-463-3102
E-mail: globalsnapshots@atlantaregional.com or download free from the ARC website at www.atlantaregional.com

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Charles Krautler, Executive Director **Darlene Daly, Project Coordinator**

The Atlanta Regional Commission is the official planning agency for the 10-county Atlanta region including Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry and Rockdale, as well as the City of Atlanta and 62 other cities. ARC provides a forum where leaders come together to discuss and act on issues of regionwide consequence.

The Community Foundation • 50 Hurt Plaza, Suite 449, Atlanta, Georgia 30303 • 404.688.5525 • www.atlcf.org

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