

UC SANTA BARBARA

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UCSB Scholars to Discuss Haiti and the Aftermath of the Recent Earthquake

Following last week's devastating earthquake in Haiti, the entire global community has focused its attention on the small Caribbean nation. The Center for Black Studies Research at UC Santa Barbara is hosting a forum on Thursday, January 21, to discuss the tragedy, suggest ways that individuals here in Santa Barbara can come to the country's aid, and what the disaster might mean for the Haitian people.

The forum will begin at 4 p.m. in the campus's MultiCultural Center Theater. It is free and open to the public.

Among the participants will be Claudine Michel and Nadège Clitandre. Michel, a professor of Black studies, is also director of the Center for Black Studies Research and editor of the highly acclaimed Journal of Haitian Studies, which is based at UCSB. She is the author of "Offerings: Continuity and Transformation in Haitian Vodou," forthcoming from Oxford University Press, and co-editor of "Spirit, Myth and Reality in Haitian Vodou" (Florida University Press, 2003). Clitandre is executive director of Haiti Soleil, a nonprofit organization based in Berkeley that seeks to bring about social change in Haiti by providing young people with opportunities for intellectual exchange and creative expression. She is also a UC President's Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Black Studies at UCSB.

"We're very fortunate to have at UCSB a longstanding commitment to improving the lives of the Haitian people," said Clyde Woods, acting director of the Center for Black Studies Research and an associate professor of Black Studies, who has done extensive research on the impact of Hurricane Katrina. "The center has several ongoing projects involving Haiti that focus on religion and issues of economic and social justice." He noted the center's partnership with Clitandre and Haiti Soleil to Bibliotheque du Soleil, a newly created community library in the city of Port-au-Prince. The library was significantly damaged during the earthquake.

In addition, the center hosted a symposium last spring that examined the state of Haitian studies and the impact of the four hurricanes in 2008. The event also marked the release of the film "Poto Mitan: Haitian, Women, Pillars of the Global Economy." The film, on which Michel served as production consultant, premiered at last year's Santa Barbara International Film Festival.

According to Woods, Michel and Clitandre, both natives of Haiti, will discuss conditions in the country prior to the earthquake, their own circumstances -- and those of their families -- in the aftermath of the disaster, and the current needs of the Haitian people.

Other participants will include Chancellor Henry T. Yang and other members of the UCSB faculty, administration, staff, and students who are committed to supporting the relief effort.

"We want to focus on rebuilding and relief," said Woods, "but you have to understand the people and the country in order for relief efforts to be most effective. We want to show there is a united effort at UCSB, and to think of creative ways of providing assistance, support for Haitian students, educational programs, and beneficial scholarship."

The center will post updates on its Web page to keep the campus and community apprised of UCSB research efforts.

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[Center for Black Studies Research](#)

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