

NOVEMBER 20, 2024



DuSable Scholars Program participants

2024 DHA ANNUAL GALA

On March 2, 2024, DHA hosted its annual fundraising gala at the Palmer House Hotel. This year's theme was Kanaval in Chicago, designed to celebrate both Haiti's and Chicago's rich and diverse cultures. In keeping with the theme, each table was decorated with masks of different colors. The walls were lined with tables featuring items ranging from art pieces, jewelry, and Haitian barbanccourt rhum. These pieces were all part of the silent auction and raffle guests bid on as the evening progressed.

The event's visual theme was not only a celebration of Haiti's broader culture but also of DHA's work towards garnering recognition for Jean-Baptiste Pointe DuSable's



legacy, as the event's proceeds directly went towards the construction of the DuSable Park. The masters of ceremony, Hervé Léonard and Abigail Pierre-Louis, welcomed various speakers on stage who explored this legacy's past heritage, present forms, and future hopes. These speakers included Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul and the event's keynote speaker, Dr. Gerdine Ulysse.

Throughout the event, guests enjoyed a gourmet meal that was accompanied by live performances
(continues on page 3)



DID YOU KNOW?

DuSable began sailing on his father's ships as a seaman, and on one such voyage to New Orleans (then a French colony), his ship was damaged, and the boat sank. An injured DuSable managed to make his way to the mainland, having lost his identity papers. Finding out that Spain had taken control of the city, he faced arrest and even enslavement. Fortunately, a group of French Jesuits protected him while he recovered.

2024 DHA ANNUAL GALA HIGHLIGHTS





by artists such as musician and poet Mecca “Grimo” Marcelin, who serves as the cultural ambassador of the National Alliance for the Advancement of Haitian Professionals (NAAHP). His poetic performance celebrated Haiti’s history of marronage and independence. In keeping with Marcelin’s role as a cultural ambassador, his words also encouraged young Haitians to be proud of their heritage.

In addition to celebrating DHA’s efforts, the evening was an opportunity to celebrate the academic achievements of students participating in the DuSable Scholar

Program (DSP) at the University of Illinois-Chicago. Dr. Jeremiah Abiade presented awards to Alena Moisson and Karim Mohammed, who were recognized for creating a sense of community for their peers.

During his speech, Abiade emphasized the importance of building community among UIC’s black student population and reinforcing a spirit of solidarity in the face of new challenges against DEI on university campuses. Abiade’s words, along with his students’ achievements, are a reminder that DuSable’s legacy must continue not only in the monuments and spaces constructed in his honor but in the next generation we raise to remember, celebrate and protect this heritage.

We sat down with several of the evening’s speakers and hosts to hear their thoughts about DHA during the event. Here is what they had to say:

“The DHA gala is an opportunity to bring so many different people together to celebrate one idea, one man, who against all odds decided to do something that was not expected of him--to become an

entrepreneur as a black man in the 1700s. That is something that we have to celebrate.”

--Serge Pierre-Louis,
DHA Founder

“There is a lot of significance in being able to understand your history, know your history, and see the power behind all that you have come from. Because our narratives are written for us now, and a lot of the time, they are dismissive of the fact that there were heroes in our stories. There was power in the fact that we were the people who founded places and created the path for people to follow. So, it means a lot to me because it’s a legacy. We’re just not told about our legacy. It can be so empowering and something that pushes people to be greater.”

--Abigail Pierre-Louis

Thank you to all those who could attend and have supported us. We hope to see you at next year’s gala! In the meantime, check out some highlights from the event [here](#).



From Left to Right: Quebec Delegation Mr. Jean-Francois Hould, Consul General of France Mr. Yannick Tagand, DHA President Nicolas Paul and daughter Sophia Paul, IL Attorney General Mr. Kwame Raoul, Consul General of Canada Mrs. Madeleine Fequiere, Consul General of Haiti Mr. Youri Emmanuel, Consul General of Danmark Mr. Jesper Andersen, University of Chicago professor Dr. Gerdine Ulysse and husband Serge.

NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear friends and supporters,

As many of you know, the DuSable Heritage Association (DHA) is about to celebrate our 25th Anniversary in 2025. It is with great joy and enthusiasm that we welcome you to our very first newsletter edition! Our cover stories in this issue highlight some of DHA's exciting recent and upcoming events, including the DHA Gala in March 2024, our Film Festival in June, the DuSable Memorial Commemoration on August 24, and updates on the DuSable Park project.

This quarterly newsletter will serve to strengthen DHA's mission of promoting and protecting the legacy of Jean-Baptiste Pointe DuSable, the founder of Chicago. Through each story, we aim to connect with our communities, readers, friends, supporters, and all those who share an interest in honoring DuSable's lasting impact.

I want to take this moment to express our deep appreciation for your continued support over the past two decades. We are also deeply grateful for the dedication of our Board of Directors, Committee, Advisors, and especially to Editor Rachel Chery of the University of Chicago for her role in bringing this newsletter to life.

I hope that you enjoy this first edition and invite you to consider how you might become involved in the inspiring work taking place at DHA.

Kind regards,

Nicolas Paul
President, DuSable Heritage Association

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR



Dear Readers,

Welcome to our first edition of the DuSable Heritage Association (DHA) Newsletter! Our goal is to bring you stories that highlight the people, events, and ideas shaping DHA's mission of honoring Jean-Baptiste Pointe DuSable's legacy in Chicago. In these pages, we present the events the organization has hosted throughout 2024.

As a first-generation Haitian American, I consider it an honor to celebrate the achievements of members of the Haitian Diaspora and shed light on Haiti's contributions to American History.

I hope this issue deepens your appreciation for our city's diverse heritage and inspires you to explore new ways to connect with our shared past. We are grateful for your readership and the voices and perspectives that make our community so special. Thank you for being part of this journey with us.

Warm regards,

Rachel Chery,
Editor, DHA Newsletter

HONORING LEGACY AND LEADERSHIP



ABOUT DHA

“Being Haitian and knowing that the founder of the great city of Chicago is credited to Jean-Baptiste Pointe DuSable is a point of Pride for me. I hope that we have done our job teaching others the story so they can share that story.”

--Éric Guilliod

The DuSable Heritage Association was founded in 2000 with the mission of promoting the legacy of Jean-Baptiste Pointe DuSable—A black man of Haitian descent, immigrant, Chicago’s first entrepreneur, first administrator, and pioneer of multiculturalism.

Over the years, the DHA has worked with the Chicago Park District and the DuSable Park Coalition to plan the future DuSable Park near Navy Pier, where the Chicago River meets Lake Michigan, close to DuSable’s original home. As of May 2020, the Chicago Plan Commission approved developer Related Midwest’s plan for 400 North Lake Shore Drive, including DuSable Park. Our organization’s goal is not only to raise the money needed to complete the park’s construction but also to feature a bust of DuSable at the park.



DuSable Heritage Association (DHA) established itself in Chicago in 2000 with the purpose of promoting and honoring the legacy of Jean-Baptiste Pointe DuSable, the founder of Chicago, through educational and cultural activities. Many who joined the work have brought with them a passion for understanding and celebrating the legacy of the man who has shaped the city of Chicago.

One such person is Mr. Etzer Cantave, who served as DHA’s president for four years. At the time Mr. Cantave stepped down from his role as president of DHA in October of 2023, he was the longest-serving president after the founder.

As president and supporter of DHA, Etzer gave generously of his time, made sound decisions, and acted in the best interest of our organization. It has been a pleasure having Etzer at the helm and witnessing the progress DHA has made under his leadership. We at DHA are proud to have had such a distinguished gentleman serving as president of our wonderful organization.

Thank you, Etzer, for making our mission possible!
We wish you the best of luck in your future endeavors.

CELEBRATING TRANSITIONING AND CURRENT MEMBERS OF THE DHA BOARD



CASSANDRA BAPTISTE
DHA BOARD OF DIRECTORS,

For over two decades, DHA invited many to join the work, especially Haitian-Americans who were curious to learn and contribute to fulfill such a mission. Cassandra Baptiste is one of those Haitian Americans who joined DHA to do just that: to learn, contribute, and advance the organization's mission. During her time on DHA's board, Cassandra has contributed greatly to the work. Cassandra's leadership skills, energy, and savoir-faire have led the organization on a path to continuous success. As Cassandra leaves for DHA to pursue her career opportunities, we are grateful for the time she spent with us.

DHA and its Board and Directors wish Cassandra continued success in her next chapter. Thank you, Cassandra, for serving. DHA will miss your contribution to the work and, most of all, you.



CATHERINE AUGUSTE-DAUPHIN
DHA BOARD OF DIRECTORS, SECRETARY

Since its creation in August 2002, DHA has welcomed individuals from diverse backgrounds with an interest in the life of DuSable, including the history and culture pertaining to the early settlement of the American Midwest. Many have served over the past twenty-two years, bringing their talents and skills to share with us. Catherine is one of the individuals who has served on DHA's Board of Directors for three years. During her tenure, Catherine played a crucial role in helping shape DHA's operation and advance its mission to promote the legacy of Jean-Baptiste Pointe DuSable, founder of Chicago, through educational and cultural activities.

Catherine's leadership and amazing ability to manage multiple tasks for DHA's Annual Gala, retreat, commemoration, and meetings are commendable (second to none).

DHA is most grateful to have been the beneficiary of Catherine's talent, patience, and skills.

She has been one of the pillars of the DuSable Heritage Association.

Catherine, We Thank you For All You Do!
DHA Board of Directors

2024 DUSABLE COMMEMORATION

On August 24, 2024, the DuSable Heritage Association (DHA), in collaboration with the DuSable Park Coalition, the Chicago Park District, and Friends of the Parks, hosted a heartfelt celebration honoring the life and legacy of Jean Baptiste Pointe DuSable, the founder of Chicago. The event was designed to recognize DuSable's remarkable contributions and enhance public understanding of his pivotal role in Chicago's history. A series of activities throughout the day brought together community members and reinforced a sense of shared heritage and pride.



The commemoration began at 11:00 AM with an opening ceremony led by the DHA. Several distinguished speakers highlighted DuSable's accomplishments and heritage as a Haitian-born fur trader, businessperson, and influential figure in the city's founding. Among those addressing the crowd were Alderman David Moore of Chicago's 17th Ward, Andrew Johnson from the Native American Chamber of Commerce of Illinois, Rosa Escareño, General Superintendent and CEO of the Chicago Park District, and Professor Abiade alongside students from the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Each speaker emphasized DuSable's enduring legacy and his essential role in the establishment of Chicago, sharing insights into his work, partnerships, and the community he built.

Throughout the day, attendees participated in a variety of meaningful activities. A wreath-laying ceremony paid a solemn tribute to DuSable, honoring his memory and impact on Chicago's heritage. A walking tour led by DHA founder Dr. Serge Pierre-Louis and Dr. Courtney Joseph of Lake Forest College offered participants an immersive exploration of Chicago's historic sites related to DuSable. Through storytelling and shared narratives, the tour highlighted DuSable's role in establishing Chicago as a trade hub and his relationships with local Indigenous communities. Adding a unique visual element to the day, The Floating Museum presented the Founders Inflatable Sculpture, an impressive artwork depicting DuSable alongside his partner Kitihawa and former Mayor Harold Washington. This sculpture served as a focal point of the celebration, representing the multicultural roots that define Chicago's story.



The event drew a diverse crowd of over one hundred attendees, including professors, students, community members, community leaders, as well as members and volunteers from the DuSable Heritage Association. Participants left with a renewed pride in their city and a deeper appreciation for the multicultural narrative that shapes Chicago. This commemoration served not only as a tribute to DuSable's legacy but also as a reminder of Chicago's inclusive history and the shared heritage that connects its communities.

This successful event was made possible through the collaboration of the DuSable Park Coalition, the Chicago Park District, Friends of the Parks, the University of Illinois at Chicago, Professor Ron Henderson of Illinois Institute of Technology who coordinating the delivery of the wreath via canoes in the Chicago River. We would also like to thank the Chicago History Museum for donating the wreath, the Friends of the Chicago River, who organized a display on DuSable that day in their McCormick Museum, and many dedicated local organizations and volunteers. Special thanks to all speakers and attendees who contributed to this meaningful celebration and helped honor Jean Baptiste Pointe DuSable's place in Chicago's history.

The event was covered by VOA/ Voice of America. Links are available below:

[VOA Website](#)

[VOA Facebook Page](#)



DHA SCREENING RECEPTION

On June 15, 2024, crowds gathered at Facets Theater to view director and executive producer Karm Syndia's "A Heart On The Mend." The screening was part of the 21st Annual African Diaspora International Film Festival. The movie follows the story of Ralph Guy Alexandre (played by Brunir Olivier Shackleton) after the sudden death of his fiancée the night before their wedding. As Ralph picks up the pieces to his life, viewers meet new characters whose journeys are filled with heartache.

Attendees ate in community with one another before the film, enjoying sweet plantains and rice.

In addition to the film, DHA hosted a brief Q&A session after the screening, where audiences could engage with the themes and ideas that stood out to them. For the director, it was important that the film was educative and informative. For example, audiences learned that coffee can calm the respiratory system during an asthma attack. Syndia made clear throughout her responses that this film was designed to be an alternative representation of Haitians--one that showcased our hospitality, resilience, and compassion.

We hope you can join us next year!



UPCOMING EVENTS:

Please save the date for DHA's 25th Anniversary Gala & Fundraiser.

Location: Palmer House Hotel Chicago

Date: Saturday, March 1, 2025

Stay tuned for more updates!



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