

**The  
BLACK  
C o m m e n t a t o r**  
Commentary, analysis and investigations  
on issues affecting African Americans  
[www.blackcommentator.com](http://www.blackcommentator.com)

**June 18, 2009 - Issue 329**

[Contents of Issue](#)

[Click here](#)

[Home](#)

**Gade Sa Neg d'Ayiti fè mwen!  
Look at what Haiti (Haiti's Tyrants) did to me!  
By Ezili Dantò/Marguerite Laurent  
President, Haitian Lawyers Leadership Network  
BlackCommentator.com Guest Commentator**

Click on the back button of your browser to return to non printer friendly page of this article

[Click here](#) to get helpful hints for viewing and printing this printer friendly plain text page

Veye Yo is Father Gerard Jean Juste's grassroots human rights organization on 54th Street, Miami, Florida, which he founded in 1979. - *"Don't cry when I die," said Father Gerard Jean Juste, I leave the rest for all of you."*

Inside the Veye Yo headquarters, on June 6, 2009, after the Church memorial at the Notre Dame D'Haiti Catholic Center, I met up with veteran Haitian human right activists from all over the US, Haiti, and Canada and we gathered together as a community in mourning but [doubly determined](#) to continue the work of Father Gerard Jean Juste ("Jyeri"). We shared our stories and many made it a point to tell me how important and meaningful our HLLN advocacy work, information, promotion of Haitian culture and counter-colonial narratives is for them.

Old Angelina St-Phar, sat in the same place at the Veye Yo headquarters that she has been sitting at for over twenty years of attending Veye Yo meetings. Everyone acknowledges that she had a very special relationship with father Jean Juste. She's your mother, your special grandmother, that aunt you have who is always making you a healing cup of tea. She was that for Father Jean Juste throughout the years at Veye Yo and like Veye Yo, a safe harbor even when he was in Haiti. Angelina St-Phar is a self-effacing woman, a natural nurturer mother/warrior who prayed for Jyeri when he was ministering in Haiti, in the US, at street demonstrations, in jail or out of jail. She prepared special care packages, shaving kits, soap, socks, what mothers do. Watched his back and was known for whispering truth directly into his ear or for being a steady, calm center even when things got heated at Veye Yo's weekly Friday evening meetings. Angelina St-Phar will not be named in the tributes to father Jean Juste. In fact, his organization is virtually ignored by most in power, including the mainstream papers. But Lavarice Gaudin, the head of Veye Yo and the members at Veye Yo, including the tall sentinel strength and true solidarity of Jack Lieberman, provided [Father Jean Juste](#)

with the support, care and loyalty to do the work he did, draw the fire of the powers-that-be while the luckier Haitian poor, needy and without papers would try to move behind him to safer ground. Angelina St-Phar is a prime example of this strength. She was his quiet advisor and with his death, Angelina St-Phar, like Haiti, lost a treasured son. Lavarice Gaudin, like all of Haiti's young men and women, lost a father, spiritual leader and mentor.

But when I walked into the Veye Yo headquarters Angelina St-Phar was there, sitting in the same spot, not crying, watching everything (that's what the Kreyòl word "Veye Yo" means - "Watch them!"). I listened to the men and women of Veye Yo recount their many bittersweet memories of Father Jean Juste. It was a sad and tragic telling of a life of struggle, suffering and untold persecutions by the Church and the political powers, both in the US and in Haiti. Amongst all the telling to Ezili Dantò/HLLN, two veterans from Veye Yo, examples of solid courage like that of our warrior mother, Angelina St-Phar, these Haitian women told of the episode I'm about to recount.

"Tell this story to the world Ezili Dantò," said Yannick Jolicoeur and Veronique Fleurime. I promised these unheralded Haitian foot-soldiers that I would give them an international voice; that I would say this was "*yon mo kle de Jean Juste*" - I would tell of this relatively final insult, in a hundred such cumulative injustices suffered by Father Jean Juste for us and on our behalf as a community. For what Jean Juste declared at that time most touched and tore their hearts.

But before I do, it is important for those who knew nothing of Father Jean Juste to understand that he was a priest who struggled for Haitian rights his entire career. He was the spokesperson for the poor Haitian, the homeless and those without shelter, refuge and asylum. For this work for the poor and needy, he was ostracized, crucified, vilified, denigrated and imprisoned. At the time of his death, the Catholic Church, after his 30-years of service and struggling to help the poor, had stripped him of the right to perform as a priest, suspended him. He thus had no resources to pay for his hospital treatment and health problems, caused by two prison terms in Haiti for speaking out against rule-by-force, the UN occupation and the US-imposed Boca Raton regime from 2004 to 2006.

During his last hospitalization in Miami, in January of 2009, when the hospital insisted Father Jean Juste had to give up the hospital bed and leave without the medication he couldn't afford, even though he was almost at death's door unable to breathe with a respiratory problem, these women of Veye Yo, who sat with him, took turns sleeping in the hospital to comfort him, relayed this to be close to his very last words, said with some strength before he would fall into semi-consciousness. Jean Juste, a fighter to the end, told the Miami hospital that was refusing him medical care that he could not leave without three things - he asked for a wheelchair, medication for the pain and gas for his respiratory tank. The hospital refused because they said he owed too much money already and needed to pay at least half of "perhaps more than \$60,000, I am not sure but he owed a lot" recalls Veronique Fleurime of Veye Yo. No Church official was there. Father Jean Juste had been fighting for human rights and equal treatment in Miami for Haitians since before 1979 when he headed Miami's Haitian Refugee Center. Ultimately it was "Ben" from Veye Yo who would hurry and apply for Medicaid to stop Jyeri from being thrown out of the hospital without any medication while so ill. Reportedly, the hospital's social worker, charged to do this task, never put the Medicaid papers through.

Meanwhile, before the application approval hit the computers, and asked to leave for lack of payment, a demoralized Father Jean Juste got out of the hospital bed, paced the

floor and as the Veye Yo women and men at his bedside, stood in tears and grief, feeling utterly helpless, he said:

*"Kounyè a espwa m fini. Si m paka jwen swèn medikal se pou m ale lakay mwen pou m'al tan lamò. (epi li frape pye a tè li di:) **Gade sa Neg d'Ayiti fè mwen!**"* - "My hope is gone now. If I can't get medical care I'm being sent home to die. (stamping his foot he ends with emphasis on these words:) Look at what Haiti (Haiti's Oligarchy, tyrants) did to me!"

This occurred approximately two weeks before Jyeri was released from the hospital. He had flown into Miami on January 7, 2009, directly from Haiti, going straight to the hospital. He went home once, in time to witness President Obama's inauguration. But would return to the hospital, after this brief home stay on an oxygen tank, and remain there until he died on May 27, 2009.

\*

There's not enough space in all of the universe to hold the pain of the Haitian men and women whose suffering Father Jean Juste sought to alleviate, nor that of his closest friends and family at Veye Yo, like Lavarice Gaudin, Farah Juste, Angelina St-Phar, Fabius Rodieu, Yeye Boul (Andre E. Joseph), Leader Fenfen, Thony Jean-Thenor, Lucie Tondreau, Ertha Noel, Yannick Jolicoeur and Veronique Fleurime, to name a few, who are witnesses and combatants alongside Jyeri and helped to bear the awful life struggle that was Jyeri's burden to bear for our community. The question is, who will now draw the fire for us, until death, like Father Jean Juste did, in pursuit of better treatment for those Haitians without papers, without power, without asylum, safety, and justice of any kind and who can't risk telling truth-to-power?

Never following the path of least resistance, Jyeri's power was centered on his faith and love of Jesus and used to serve and protect, not to maintain himself in a job or public position. He provided the needy protection and walked the perilous journey, in the frontlines of Haiti's populous neighborhoods, with the 2004 to 2006 demonstrators against Bush Regime change. They were demanding the return of President Jean Bertrand Aristide, denouncing the Haitian people's wholesale disenfranchisement, the privatization of Haiti, foreign militarization, debt, dependency and domination.

Father Jean Juste's huge sheltering presence is gone, but his indomitable spirit lives on. And, as witnesses and participants in [this David-vs-Goliath-Haitian-struggle](#) for freedom and human rights, we at Ezili's HLLN, [in solidarity with all our collaborators](#), shall pursue justice for Father Gerard Jean Juste and for Haiti's most needy - *li kite res la pou nou menm* - until US immigration and the State Department starts treating Haitians and Haiti equal to all other nationalities and countries; until they no longer embolden the Haitian Oligarchy's repressive and undemocratic rule.

### **Pursuing Justice For Jean Juste - Ezili's counter-colonial narrative to the Miami Herald's coverage of Father Jean Juste's June 6, 2009 Memorial Services**

To the end of pursuing justice, if you want to be kept engaged and posted on Haiti and the community's life in the Diaspora, skip the Miami Herald's coverage of Jean Juste's June 6, 2009 memorial and click on our [photogallery](#). You will learn more there about Haitian thinking, dress, memorial attendance and the ways the Miami community remembered Jean Juste than you'll ever find out from reading the Miami Herald/Jacqueline Charles-Trenton Daniel's article on Jean Juste, dated June 7, 2009

and entitled "[Thousands attend Little Haiti funeral for Rev. Gerard Jean-Juste.](#)"

Though I know better, it still amazes me when I attend a Haitian event, whether in the US or in Haiti, and then read about it from the embedded press. Little of the majority view of things in Haiti, on Haiti issues or on the depth and visceral nature of what actually took place is captured by these folks. You'll see the sound bites yes, the begrudging "Even though Jean-Juste fought against a system he sometimes deemed unfair to Haitians, he respected and admired the United States." But then the zingers will appear, such as these [Miami Herald](#) outlays: - "Jean-Juste also had a knack for getting in trouble...In 1980, he was fired from his \$16,000-a-year job at the HRC (Haitian Refugee Center) for what the Christian Community Service Agency called his "ineptitude" and "erratic and unproductive behavior... 'The jail time, the illness brought a lot of wisdom," Jean-Mary of Notre Dame said. "I wish he had developed it earlier..."

See, the Miami Herald was always a voice for Haiti's ruling oligarchy, the world's oligarchy - corporate America and the Church and so, in conflict to Jean Juste throughout his life and now as expressed in their article on his death.

Thony Jean-Thenor, a Veye Yo militant I spoke to said the Miami Herald article on Jean Juste's memorial was a "second killing." The article almost gave the Church Jean Juste fought all his life, the last word on Jean Juste. They chose to quote not any Veye Yo members, but a priest who said that prison in Haiti and the resulting illness it caused had matured Jyeri - gave him "wisdom" he didn't have!

For every good word they are forced to say about him, there's an awful jagged-edged pen-knife-stabbing ahead or below it. To wit: "The jail time, the illness brought a lot of wisdom," Jean-Mary of Notre Dame said. "I wish he had developed it earlier. At the same time, you have to respect his convictions. He was a fighter." ([Miami Herald](#), June 7, 2009)

What the Miami Herald fails to tell you is that by 1980, Father Jean-Juste had incurred the wrath of the archdiocese of Miami by conducting funeral services for non-Catholic Haitians who drowned at sea and by picketing Archbishop Edward McCarthy of Miami, who he said was a racist for not defending the rights of Haitian refugees. No. The Herald will not contextualize. They butcher his reputation, even at his memorial.

You won't learn that Father Jean Juste ran afoul of the Church in the 1980s because, when the church agencies wanted to treat the Haitian refugees - just as the current NGO's are treating Haiti and Haitians in Haiti - as charity cases, Father Jean Juste objected, insisted Haitians are in their situation because of injustices done to them. The pillage and plunder of Haiti by the rich and the US backing and profit from this. Justice, according to Father Jean Juste, demands rectification, changes in the US immigration laws, changes in US policy that supports dictatorship, exclusion and coup d'état, not charity after the harm has been done. He found that unconscionable, not generous and benevolent.

## **A Matter of Justice for Jean Juste**

The Miami Herald is "consistent in tarnishing the image of Father Gerard Jean Juste, just as it is in tarnishing anything that comes from the popular movement in Haiti and in glorifying anything the deviant people - the outlaw people put in place by the Bush Administration in Haiti, do" says Thony Jean-Thenor of Veye Yo. "Since the beginning until today, they've done their best to show that the Coup D'etat that ousted

democratically elected President Jean Bertrand Aristide was the best thing for Haiti. They always give the de facto's a voice while ignoring or vilifying the popular movement for justice...The day after the 2004 Coup D'etat the Miami Herald put Haiti on the business page, for the very first time, as if to say Haiti has been reborn."

"The Miami Herald denigrates Father Gerard Jean Juste because he didn't want to support the kidnapping of President Jean Bertrand Aristide. President Aristide and anyone, who was part of his government have been vilified all over the pages of the Miami Herald from 2001 until today" confides Thony Jean-Thenor.

In the Miami Herald's article, covering Jyeri's memorial, you won't learn that when, in November of 1980, the powers-that-be, including the Church, simply left 102 shipwrecked Haitians to starve to death on the deserted Island of Cayo Lobos, in the Bahamas, Father Jean Juste was the only priest to fly to the Island, on his own initiative, to bring them food, water and the media attention necessary so that officialdom would not just let these maroon Haitians die there without being rescued or be harmed when taken by force and returned to the Haiti they were fleeing. The United States had refused to come to the shipwrecked Haitians' assistance to avoid having to bring them into U.S. territory. The Bahamas made the same choice. The shipwrecked Haitians had become skeletal from starving on the isolated Island for 6 days before Jean Juste reached them. Jean Juste ignored Church warnings and went to their aid. These are some of the reasons, unexplained by the Miami memorial article that starkly contends, Father Jean Juste "had a knack for getting into trouble."

Father Jean Juste insisted that the Haitian refugees had a right to asylum because they were fleeing injustices. "'Don't go back to Haiti,' Jean Juste warned after arriving aboard a television network's helicopter. The leader of the band, Claude Pierre, said they 'could not go any place but Miami. We sell everything to go to Miami,' Pierre said. 'We lose everything in Haiti. They (Papa Doc's US-supported Tonton Macoute/dictatorship) will beat us up, kill us, put us in jail. It's a decision between life and death.'" (See, [102 Haitian Castaways Repel I Rescuers; Demand Trip To US.](#))

Back then, alone, a very young Father Jean Juste raised a media storm on behalf of these shipwrecked Haitians who were left to die on Cayo Lobos because the US did not want to apply its "wet foot/dry foot" policy to Haitians only for Cubans. Jean Juste's intervention allowed for the refugees to, for once, tell their own stories. But still, they were brutally beaten by the Bahamians while the cameras were rolling and forcibly evicted and returned to Papa Doc's Haiti because Reagan's US would not open its door to "black refugees." Knowledgeable observers believe that this public airing of the plight of Haitians to a world audience, sensitized and influence US policy makers, embarrassed by the publicity, to began to afford more equal and humane treatment to other Haitian refugees, later on. By then Father Jean Juste had made some very powerful and fierce enemies.

You won't see any of this in the Miami Herald's article about why Jean Juste may have been fired. Instead, you'll read in the Miami Herald that "...In 1980, he was fired from his \$16,000-a-year job at the (Haitian Refugee Center) HRC for what the Christian Community Service Agency called his "ineptitude" and ``erratic and unproductive behavior..."

At that time, in 1980, Miami's elected officials were telling all and sundry that all the Haitian refugees would be sent back to Haiti. As far as they were concerned, there was no place in Miami for a Haitian community as there was for the Cuban refugees. And but for Jyeri's work, that would probably have stayed true.

Today's Haitian community in Miami owes its existence to the pioneering work of Father Gerard Jean Juste. At his memorial services, Haitians and even Miami's elected officials and the Church, paid homage to this. But don't expect these details from the Miami Herald's coverage on Jean Juste's memorial. As we've already shown, if they write something good about him in a sentence, you may be sure, that soon after they will insert a zinger, like: "Jean-Juste's penchant for publicity -- more than once he threw himself on the asphalt in defiance of immigration policy."

Still, we all know that no matter how they vilified or denigrated his work on behalf of poor Haitians, abused and being murdered in the Bateys, in the prisons of Krome, at Cayo Lobos or in coup d'état or dictatorship Haiti, Father Jean Juste always insisted: "My rosary is my only weapon."

According to Thony Jean-Thenor of Veye Yo, the Miami Herald newspaper, like most of the corporate press, was "so close" to the de facto imposed 2004-2006 regime from Boca Raton, they would begrudge Jyeri the truth even at his funeral.

But, Ezili Dantò is writing this piece, and Jyeri showed us the path. Jean Juste taught us-activists by example. When Officialdom fired him from his job at the Refugee Center, or when they threw him out of the Church he had built up in Miami, he had founded his own grass-roots, Veye Yo, watch group organization to continue to give voice to the downtrodden, hungry and homeless. God, indeed, blesses the child who has his/her own.

We, at Ezili's HLLN have our own Ezili Network. Our daily posts and writings are circulated over and over again and reach millions upon millions of people. As a Haitian-led, Haitian-capacity building organization, we are the foremost counter-colonial narrators for Haiti and so the Rochambeau's of this era will not be writing Haiti's history and telling our story. No.

When they fired him, he kept going.

When they imprisoned him, he never stopped feeding the poor or ministering.

Father Jean Juste gave away the food his parishioners from St. Claire Haiti brought to him to other prisoners and even over the prison bars and fences to people in the neighborhood outside the prison who were hungry.

Like Haiti's great revolutionary hero, Kapwa Lamò, Father Jean Juste would not let any suppression of the truth stop his trajectory. Neither will we allow this Miami Herald article the final word on Father Gerard Justice. No.

What hurts us the most, those of us who came to witness and honor Jean Juste's life and works, is that his various butchers let him perish "[without confessing their wrongs and without altering their ways... a man whose heart was filled only with compassion and tolerance.](#)"

We write here today to counter the Miami Herald's lies with truth. To support the footsoldiers at Veye Yo who won't be acknowledged in their darkest time and grief period. It's a matter of justice for Jean Juste. And, yes, we own this space, this place Haitians gather to, to duct this eras' cannon balls of oppression being hurled at us by the media and their corporate and ruling tyrants. Like Jyeri we say no to violence, no to exile, no to arbitrary arrests, indefinite detentions, no to Coup D'états, no to unequal

immigration treatment of Haitian refugees, no to the [plunder and pillage of Haiti](#) by the Haitian ruling oligarchy on behalf of transnational corporations, no to the media's butchering of Haiti's freedom warriors and glorifying of the Internationals' paid thugs, death squads, imposed dictatorships and UN occupation.

### **Batay la Fèk Komanse - The battle has only just begun!**

We're still here after 300-years of enslavement and over 200-years of containment-in-poverty. No, our Ancestors did not yield to the combined forces of the whole world. Neither shall we. As far as we're concerned - *nou pap bay legen* - the battle has just begun.

Ezili's HLLN is the place Haitians come to if they need a message of truth on Haiti circulated. So, go to our [photogallery](#) to experience the thinking of Haiti's popular movement as expressed at Jean Juste's memorial and learn how Haiti and Miami came together, on June 6, 2009, to the Veye Yo headquarters to mourn, honor and remember the life and works of Father Gerald Jean Juste.

Jean Juste founded Veye Yo across the street from the Haitian Refugee Center (HRC) when HRC became embroiled in political and funding battles during the early 1980s of the Reagan years. Veye Yo, a political action/humanitarian assistance organization formally split the legal and political work of Jean Juste so that the Haitian Refugee Center could freely raise money to support the legal work and Veye Yo could do the "political work" through volunteers, funding itself and not soliciting funds and salaries as a non-for-profit. The "legal" entity requiring outside funding and paid staff did not last. Today, Veye Yo, because it meets the needs and constraints of Haitian life and reality, is the largest and most powerful Haitian grassroots group, not just in Miami but in the Haitian Diaspora. But you won't read that in any mainstream paper, certainly not in the Miami Herald.

Jyeri did not deserve to die this way. Ironically, as soon as he was dead, the Catholic Church immediately reinstated him fully as a priest. It was his dearest wish when he was alive, but he never got that respect until he was dead. At his Miami church memorial, on June 6, 2009, the Archbishop of Miami, John Clement Favalora, who could not stay for the entire service came on first and proclaimed: *"His presence with us was a sign that God was walking with us...He has walked the journey with you. He provided you with hope, strength and courage...but your walk is not over...This leadership is needed. The journey for Jean Juste is over. But the journey for you has not ended... The Church in the United States and the Arch Diocese in Miami walk with you on your journey."* That said, the Archbishop immediately left the church hurrying to another more pressing engagement.

[Click here to comment on any article  
in this issue or see what others are saying in the  
The BlackCommentator Readers' Corner Blog](#)

**BlackCommentator.com** Guest Commentator, [Ezili Dantò](#)/Marguerite Laurent is President, [Haitian Lawyers Leadership Network](#). Click [here](#) to contact Ms. Laurent.

[Contents of Issue](#)

[Click here](#)

[Home](#)



Your comments are always welcome.

### **e-Mail re-print notice**

If you send us an e-Mail message we may publish all or part of it, unless you tell us it is not for publication. You may also request that we withhold your name.

Thank you very much for your readership.

Website Design and Hosting provided by



Copyright © 2002-2009  
www.BlackCommentator.com  
All Rights Reserved