

POTO MITAN: HAITIAN WOMEN, PILLARS OF THE GLOBAL ECONOMY



Tèt Ansanm Productions presents:

POTO MITAN:
Haitian Women,
Pillars of the Global Economy

With Narration by Edwidge Danticat

**In collaboration with Renegade Pictures, Inc.
and
UC Santa Barbara's Center for Black Studies Research**





Production Facts

Film Title: Poto Mitan: Haitian Women, Pillars of the Global Economy
Release Date: April 2009; **DVD Release Date:** June 2009
Production Co.'s: Tèt Ansanm Productions, Renegade Pictures, Inc., UCSB Black Studies Research Ctr.
Film Website: <http://www.potomitan.net/>
Executive Producer: Mary Becker
Director(s)/Producer(s): Renée Bergan and Mark Schuller
Writer/Narrator: Edwidge Danticat
Shooting Format: HDV, MiniDV, DVCAM
Screening Format: DVD, MiniDV, DVCAM, DigiBeta
Running length: 50 min.
Genre: Documentary
Languages: Creole, English
Key Words: Haiti, Caribbean, Women, Globalization, Labor, Social Justice, African Diaspora
Retail Cost: \$29.95; **Organizational Rate:** \$79.95; **Public Performance/Educational Cost:** \$195
North American Educational Distributor: Documentary Educational Resources (www.der.org)

Screenings: Santa Barbara International Film Festival (SBIFF); Boston International Film Festival (BIFF); Social Justice Film Festival; Reel Work Film Festival; M.A.L.I. Women's Film & Performance Arts Festival; Michigan Womyn's Music Festival; Montreal World Film Festival; New Filmmakers Documentary Series; Montreal Haitian Film Festival; Rome International Film Festival; St. John's International Women's Film Festival; African Diaspora Film Festival and many more. For full list of screenings please go here: <http://potomitan.net/screenings.html>.
Awards: Nominated for Social Justice Award at SBIFF; Indie Spec Best Documentary Award at BIFF.

DVD Technical Details: Region 1-6 & 8; Color; Full Screen 1:33:1; stereo soundtrack; Feature running time: 50 min.; Special Features: Menus, Chapters, Trailer, Additional Info; Number of Disks: 1; Languages: Creole and English; Subtitled languages: English, Spanish, French, Portuguese.

Log Line: Told through the lives of five compelling Haitian women, *Poto Mitan* gives an inside perspective on globalization, Haiti's current crisis, and the resilient women challenging this system.

Short Synopsis: Told through the lives of five courageous Haitian women workers, *Poto Mitan* gives the global economy a human face. Each woman's personal story explains neoliberal globalization, how it is gendered, and how it impacts Haiti. And while *Poto Mitan* offers in-depth understanding of Haiti, its focus on women's subjugation, worker exploitation, poverty, and resistance demonstrates these are global struggles. **Marie-Jeanne** details dual struggles as a woman and worker: employed in a garment factory, she toils under miserable conditions to give her children the schooling she was denied because of education's high costs and gender discrimination. Living and braving death in Cité Soleil, **Solange** details how Haiti's current violence stems from a long-brewing economic crisis and the global apparel industry's inherent instability. Frustrated with male-dominated unions, **Frisline** joined a woman's organization, offering a gendered and class analysis of Haiti's contemporary situation. Working for thirty years, **Thérèse** brings a historical perspective and a comparative analysis. Thérèse's ailments also highlight the critical state of public health. Pushed off her land by foreign agricultural policies, **Hélène** leads a new grassroots campaign against violence, encouraging women to defend themselves. These five brave women demonstrate that despite monumental obstacles in a poor country like Haiti, collective action makes change possible. Initiated by the subjects themselves, *Poto Mitan* aims to inspire solidarity activism to end injustice in the global economy. Our struggles have a common thread. Fighting for justice: for women, workers, or Haiti can't help but bring about our own liberation.



Project Description

“Everyone else has spoken for Haitian women, yet, we have a history of speaking for ourselves. I support Poto Mitan because it offers us a rare glimpse into how Haitian women in the struggle understand their complex conditions and what they are doing for themselves.”

- Gina Ulysse, Haitian American scholar/activist/performer

Told through compelling lives of five courageous Haitian women workers, **Poto Mitan** gives the global economy a human face. Each woman’s personal story explains neoliberal globalization, how it is gendered, and how it impacts Haiti: inhumane working/living conditions, violence, poverty, lack of education, and poor health care. And while **Poto Mitan** offers in-depth understanding of Haiti, its focus on women’s subjugation, worker exploitation, poverty, and resistance demonstrates these are *global* struggles.

Marie-Jeanne details dual struggles as a woman and worker: she toils under miserable conditions to give her children the education she was denied because of gender discrimination and the high cost of school. Living and braving death in Cité Soleil, **Solange** details how Haiti’s current violence stems from a long-brewing economic crisis and how the global apparel industry’s inherent instability affects Haiti. Frustrated with male-dominated unions, **Frisline** offers a Marxist-feminist analysis of Haiti’s contemporary situation, including Haiti’s 2008 food crisis. Working for thirty years, **Thérèse** brings wisdom, a historical perspective, and a comparative analysis. Pushed off her land by foreign agricultural policies, activist **Hélène** leads a new grassroots campaign against violence, encouraging women to defend themselves. These five brave women demonstrate that despite monumental obstacles in a poor country like Haiti, collective action makes change possible.

The women’s own astute analyses are supported by interviews with Haitian NGO activists, government ministers, and scholars providing global, economic, and political context. The women’s struggles to unionize and images of their deplorable working conditions (captured by spy cameras) are juxtaposed with contradictory interviews of factory owners. Ultimately, these resilient women’s hardships are offset with positive images of them organizing and uniting their communities.

Throughout the film, the women’s stories are woven together by close-up shots of a mother’s hands braiding her daughter’s hair, while acclaimed novelist Edwidge Danticat narrates a “*krik krak*,” traditional folklore. This poetic story demonstrates Haitian women’s historical depth of struggle and resistance, while providing homage to Haiti’s oral storytelling culture. The *krik-krak* grows and weaves with the film, until finally the two resolve together, with hope and resilience. In addition to these beautiful spoken words, **Poto Mitan** showcases a range of contemporary Haitian music by Emeline Michel, Boukman Eksperyans, Brothers Posse, Manze Dayila and the Nago Nation, and Awozam, along with empowerment songs by the women in the film.

Poto Mitan’s unique quality rests upon the women’s acute understanding of the power of film. Citing the Haitian proverb, “hearing and seeing are two different things,” the women implored Schuller to share their stories with people in the U.S., people who have the power to make change.

Poto Mitan will be a tool for education and empowerment; to inspire people to think critically, look behind the label, and get involved. We are connected: U.S. consumers buy the fruits of their labor; our government shapes Haiti through development/foreign policy. Our struggles have a common thread. Fighting for justice: women, workers, or Haiti can’t help but bring about our own liberation.



Project Goals

“Poto Mitan will be a valuable tool. Indeed, the value of the film for advocacy and education results not just from the quality of the story telling but also from the quality of the film itself. People will want to see this film, and be open to demanding change from the policymakers.”

-Tom Ricker, Quixote Center / Haiti Reborn

Poto Mitan will be a tool for raising awareness, funds, and people’s voice. Aimed at community organizations, it will be an essential tool for change for civil rights, labor, women, global justice, faith and Haitian solidarity groups. It will also be an important educational resource for anthropology, sociology, black, film, global and women’s studies departments.

- **Raising awareness:** We are planning a film screening/speaking tour accompanied by the film’s subjects. Accompanying roundtable discussions will involve students, women’s groups, labor unions, civil rights activists, and Haiti solidarity organizations. Our main goal is to spark dialogue between the Haitian women and US groups, to encourage an exchange of organizing strategies between activists, and to build bridges between labor, immigrant’s rights, and women’s groups. Our tour will mobilize people throughout cities with large Haitian American communities to articulate common goals and transform a transnational development agenda.
- **Raising funds for Haiti:** Eighteen groups addressing justice for workers, women, and Haiti have endorsed ***Poto Mitan*** and are committed to use it upon completion. Partners of the film, including Haiti Reborn, Dwa Fanm, and the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti, plan to use the film to draw new people into organizing for causes such as structural reform of international development, and a sizeable increase in Haiti’s minimum wage. Jubilee USA plans to use ***Poto Mitan*** in their annual appeal to pass the Jubilee Act (debt cancellation) and to raise funds for community organizers. In recent fundraisers, we have shared proceeds with groups for immediate hurricane relief. Upon completion, ***ALL*** proceeds will be donated to select Haitian women’s organizations.
- **Raising voices:** Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees calls ***Poto Mitan*** a “powerful tool for self-empowerment, discussion and action.” Inspired by Robert Greenwald’s successful grassroots distribution methods, we will create a screening headquarters on our website, empowering organizations/partners to host screenings of the film in their communities easily and affordably. Our website will be an integral tool for this: already we have a “take action” page with web links connecting viewers to critical campaigns and our solidarity partners, with hundreds already having done so. Downloadable organizing and discussion toolkits will be available.

Because ***Poto Mitan*** is fiscally sponsored by UCSB’s Center for Black Studies Research (an internationally renowned leader in Haitian studies), it will be promoted extensively at the university level, through a series of forums, list serves, and academic conferences. Scholars have offered to review ***Poto Mitan*** in scholarly journals. Discussion guides/kits will be provided for teachers’ use.



Director's Statements

Mark Schuller

From 2003 to 2005, as a graduate student at UC Santa Barbara, I was in Haiti during a protracted crisis doing research on globalization and its impacts on Haiti. As an anthropologist of *this* century, post-colonial and hopefully post-imperial, I took it as a given to give back to the people who generously shared their time, experience, stories, and expertise toward my research on women's groups in Haiti.

Citing a Haitian proverb, *tande ak we se de* (hearing and seeing are different things), women at one of the groups wanted me to make a film to share their stories directly with people in the North. These factory workers and street merchants are savvy about geopolitics and what scholars call "globalization." They know the power of video to move people, and wanted to engage the people who buy the fruits of their labor, people whose governments are shaping daily life in Haiti through aid and foreign policy. Since they can't have U.S. visas to visit us in person, producing a documentary was the next best thing.

Not knowing the first thing about film, I asked for help. UCSB's Film Studies put me in touch with alumna Renée Bergan, who – on her own – made an award-winning film about women in Afghanistan just following the U.S. invasion. With her artistic vision and technical expertise, and my scholarly and local knowledge and contacts, we began to conceptualize ideas for *Poto Mitan*.

Without UCSB's Center for Black Studies Research, this film would never have become reality. They gave us seed money to make our initial trip and get the film off the ground, they were instrumental in fundraising efforts, they were our fiscal sponsor which allowed us to receive tax-deductible donations, they gave considerable material and technical support with administration and promotional needs, assisted with grants and ultimately they believed in us and the project, even when we had doubts. Their strength carried us through to the end. Center director Claudine Michel connected us to Haitian scholar and performance artist Gina Ulysse who donated her talents in fundraisers and acclaimed Haitian American novelist Edwidge Danticat, who offers her moving words as *krik-krak* to weave the women's stories together in a beautiful homage to Haiti's cultural richness.

I have to say that the women were right. Film can truly be a powerful tool to move people. As they say in Haiti, *je pa we, ke pap tounen* (the heart is not stirred by what you don't see). I can and have written a lot about the inequalities in the world system and how they impact Haiti, about Haiti's debt, etc. But people have to see for themselves what a minimum wage of \$1.75 a day actually affords. To see the toilet, to see the bullet holes, to see the dirt-floor, tin-roof, 7-by-8 house that sleeps seven people. People have to be affected in the gut.

But making a film isn't easy, certainly not in Haiti. Having been a grassroots activist in the U.S., and having completed a Ph.D and two edited books, I can say that this was the most challenging project I've ever done. On the ground, the filming was as difficult as its subject. The politics of being foreign during an occupation, telling a story from the point of view of Haiti's excluded majority – and poor *women*, especially – made for some serious challenges. But in the end, I do feel that it is worth it. I feel – finally – I have something concrete to give back.

But we have our work cut out for us. As an activist (now Haiti solidarity activist) and as a scholar, I feel viscerally how much work needs to be done. First is to change the story we tell about Haiti. Before this film, I have to say that out of 1200 students whom I've lectured on Haiti, *only one* had a positive first impression of Haiti. And it was Haiti's cultural treasure in its music. This film is long overdue. Making

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this film was truly a labor of love for many people. Almost 150 people contributed as little as \$10 and as much as \$10,000 to make this happen.

Honoring Haitian women's activism and strength, we are aiming for this film to be an agent for social change. We are making *Poto Mitan* to be a **tool for raising awareness, funds, and people's voice**. Whether at a scholarly conference, in a church basement, in a university auditorium, or at a film festival, *Poto Mitan* inspires lively dialogue, bringing together people who ordinarily do not speak to one another. Invariably, people feel a personal connection with these five brave women, inspired by them to think about our responsibility. Invariably, people ask, "what is the root cause of these injustices?" and "what can I do?"

Poto Mitan will be a tool for education and empowerment; to inspire people to think critically, look behind the label, and get involved. We are connected: U.S. consumers buy the fruits of their labor; our government shapes Haiti through development/foreign policy. Our struggles have a common thread. Fighting for justice: women, workers, or Haiti can't help but bring about our own liberation.

Please join us in our effort!

"For many years now I've been telling people that fanm se poto mitan tout sosyete (women are the central pillars of society). This wonderful film is a testimony of the courage, resilience and determination of Haitian women. Needless to say that I'm very thrilled! I encourage everyone to support this great endeavour!"

-Marleine Bastien, Executive Director, FANM

Renée Bergan

Mark first contacted me in 2005 because he was passionate and dedicated to the video project, but was not a filmmaker; he'd heard I had done a similar project about Afghan women in 2002. His years of experience and understanding of the situation in Haiti combined with my film experience—shooting social justice documentaries about women in remote countries with low budgets--seemed like a complementary combination. I knew very little about Haiti, but was intrigued.

I was particularly impressed by the fact that this was not his idea, but the Haitian women's idea, reminding me of the incredible political astuteness of the women of Afghanistan I worked with on my first documentary project. I am always extremely impressed by the incredibly strong resilience of these women that persevere despite environments of severe poverty, political strife and daily, personal danger. They both inspire and humble me, leaving me wondering if under similar circumstances, I could be as courageous and strong as them. Unfortunately, there is a history of privileged, western feminists imposing their ideas upon women of different countries; my goal is the opposite. I want to learn from these women; and share their courage, strength and wisdom with the rest of the world. I have a skill and the equipment with which to make this happen. My cameras thus serve as a vehicle for these women to speak to people around the globe.

PRODUCTION

Our research trip (my first time to Haiti) was in August of 2006, where we shot over 20 hours of footage. We met with several women individually to see who would work best in the film. The decisions were not easy, but ultimately we chose five women whose stories we felt were different yet complementary enough for the project.

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Over the next two years, we returned three more times to interview the women, and travel across Haiti to acquire necessary images. Each time we returned, the situation was always different. Sometimes the political atmosphere was relaxed, safe; Mark and I and our subjects were able to move about freely, filming in the streets. At other times, the women's security was endangered and they were fearful or reluctant to meet with us. At one point, one woman was even threatened when her neighbors saw her meeting with us, foreigners ("blan"). As result, she never did another interview with us (though she did want and allow us to use her previous interview in the film.) Additionally, during times of political volatility, it was not safe for me to shoot outside and our travel was limited to certain "safer" areas where violence was less prone to occur. While these were serious limitations, we did manage to work around them. For example, we hired a local Haitian cameraperson to film the women in their own environments when foreign presence would have attracted undesirable attention to the women or us.

Another difficult challenge was documenting the factory conditions. We made endless attempts to do so legitimately by contacting numerous factory owners and their associations. Except for one owner who gave us a tour of his empty factory, all other requests were ignored. Knowing from the onset that this would be a challenge, we bought disposable and digital still cameras to give to the workers. And later, when it was clear that we were not going to get our video camera into any factories in Port-au-Prince, we also bought a video spy camera. Understanding this was a risk – but also understanding the importance of documenting their working conditions –several workers agreed to bring these cameras into their work place. We are indebted to them for without their valiant efforts, there would be very little footage that demonstrates the conditions inside the factories.

Additional factory footage was later acquired through a combination of our tenacity and fortune. Thinking that a factory in the Free Trade Zone (on the border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic) would be more open to our cameras, we struggled to make a connection and eventually contacted a manager and successfully set up an appointment to film. We drove an entire day over bumpy Haitian roads only to be refused at the door. Totally dismayed, crushed and furious, we luckily met workers who had been allowed in the past to shoot footage in that very same factory. They graciously allowed us to use this footage in the film.

POST PRODUCTION

It was important for us to start the film with beautiful imagery of Haiti's pastoral beaches and countryside. So much of what mainstream media shows is the poverty and devastation; we felt it necessary to show the parts of the country so often forgotten. These images blend into the cityscape as the entry into the film, but also represent the peasant's migration to the city (an important issue touched upon later in the film).

But the question remained: HOW to tell the women's stories? How do we simultaneously share the women's story, and Haiti's story without a lot of repetition and yet maintain cohesion? From the start we saw two stylistic choices: base the film around certain recurring themes and have the women lend their thoughts and experiences collectively in each section; or have the film revolve around each women's distinctly unique, yet at times similar, lives which would represent different aspects of Haiti. With the former, it would be less repetitive, but we felt, less personal. So we chose the latter, as we really wanted the audience to connect with the women, and see Haiti through their eyes thereby understanding their circumstance more experientially.

Another challenge was to avoid overwhelming the audience; how do we make a film dense with information more digestible? We needed to create breaks between each woman's section to give the audience a moment of reprieve, to ponder the stories and information. Reflecting on that, and simultaneously wanting to pay homage to Haiti's rich culture, we conceived what we call the "krik-krak" narrative bridges—a departure from the rest of the films traditional documentary style. Women braiding

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each other's hair is a common sight on Haitian streets, something I personally find to be a beautifully bonding practice. So why not take this cultural practice and make it a literal and metaphorical weaving of the women's stories? That is how we came up with the idea of a mother braiding her daughter's hair.

The voice-over idea came from consideration of Haiti's rich oral storytelling culture, referred to as "krik Krak." We asked renowned Haitian American novelist Edwidge Danticat to read excerpts from her work, which we slightly edited to make more personal and poignant for the women's individual stories. This voice over weaves the symbolism of the women's narratives even tighter.

The third element (or braid!) of these interludes is our stylistic choice to shoot these scenes in a dreamlike manner. The anonymity created by the soft focused images and close ups of hands, hair, braids, eyes, or parts of faces, allows the viewer to see these "characters" not as individuals, but rather as representations of everyday Haitian women. As such, these narrative bridges become metaphorical bridges from the stories of five Haitian women to the common plight of all Haitian women.

A decision typically late in the post-production process, yet of vital import is that of music. Without question, we were going to include scenes where the women are singing at meetings because song IS a political tool, but the soundtrack had it's own set of complications. Again, we wanted to honor Haiti's rich culture by including particularly Haitian music—while at the same time avoiding the music of Vodou (a religion whose practices have unfortunately become a negative stereotype of Haitian culture), a decision the women of the film also agreed with. Most contemporary Haitian music didn't work stylistically with our content either. After much research and advice from colleagues, we were able to coalesce a wonderful soundtrack of songs that either pay homage to Haiti or add socio-political commentary to scenes in the film.

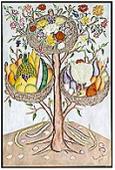
REFLECTIONS

Although difficult, and at times dangerous for Mark, the women, and myself my experience in making this film has been very positive overall. When asked what Haiti is like, I say it is a hard country, particularly in the capital. Yet despite the hardships, there is as much beauty, both overtly in the countryside and discreetly in the city, as there is an intangible spirit: an air of pride due in large part to Haiti's origin as the first free black country, stemming from a 200 year old victory in a battle between renegade slaves and their colonists. Sadly they are still fighting that battle, only now on a global level. But they will continue to fight, for the Haitians I have met are amazing, strong, inspiring leaders in their own right, whether they run a union, a farming co-op, women's support group or their own home.

Little did I know with the onset of this project, the true uniqueness of this film and even more so, the need; the barrage of emails during production asking when the film would be available was shocking. This is the first film told from the people on the ground, the people laying the foundation for Haiti's workforce. For the first time these workers/women can share their concerns, their lives and their words with the rest of the world. This in itself makes the film truly one of a kind. The greatest honor and compliment for Mark and I is when Haitians and the Diaspora see the film, cry and smile and say, "Thank you, for finally making a respectful film about Haiti. It's time." I am eternally grateful and honored to have been a part of this timely project.

*"A moving and stirring film, showing Haitian women speaking for themselves.
A must see."*

- Edwidge Danticat, Award winning novelist



Key Personnel

Mary Becker – Executive Producer

Mary Becker previously worked as a certified financial planner and investment advisor in affiliation with First Affirmative Financial Network. Her primary emphasis was advising individuals and organizations on developing investment strategies for socially responsible portfolios. In 2000 she sold her business and retired from the investment/financial planning profession. Currently Ms. Becker lives in Santa Barbara, CA and works as a spiritual director and is on the training staff of Stillpoint Spiritual Direction training program. She is a practitioner and promoter of contemplative dialogue as a tool for communication and connection. She is actively involved as a volunteer with several community organizations mostly in the area of peace making, and is on the national boards of the Center for Contemplative Dialogue, Just Faith, and Fonkoze, a microfinance/literacy program in Haiti. She is the executive producer of the prize-winning documentary, *Original Child Bomb*.

Edwidge Danticat – Writer/Narrator

Born in Haiti, Danticat moved to the U.S. when she was twelve. She is the author of several books, including 2007 Books Critics Circle Award winning *Brother, I'm Dying*; Oprah Book Club selection *Breath, Eyes, Memory*; National Book Award finalist *Krik? Krak*; American Book Award winner *The Farming of Bones*; *After the Dance*, and *the Dew Breaker*. She is also the editor of *The Butterfly's Way: Voices from the Haitian Diaspora in the United States* and *The Beacon Best of 2000: Great Writing by Men and Women of All Colors and Cultures*. Danticat earned a degree in French Literature from Barnard College, where she won the 1995 Woman of Achievement Award, and later an MFA from Brown University.

Renée Bergan - Co-Producer/Co-Director/Director of Photography/Editor

Renée Bergan founded Renegade Pictures, Inc., in 2003 with the sole goal of educating, inspiring and advocating change through her films. Ms. Bergan studied cinema in Paris, France in 1989, and received her degree in film from the University of California, Santa Barbara in 1993. While attending UCSB, Ms. Bergan received a Corwin Award for her short documentary, *Persistent Discretion*, a 16mm film about domestic violence. She also received Best Cinematography for her work on a fictional short, *Girl in the Window. Sadaa E Zan* (Voices of Women), a documentary about Afghan women, received the Social Justice Award for Best Documentary at the Santa Barbara International Film Festival in 2003, as well as the Audience Award and Best Director Award in the Documentary category of the New York International Independent Film & Video Festival in the spring of 2004. Also, in 2004, Ms. Bergan completed *Paul Soldner: Playing With Fire*, a documentary about revolutionary ceramist Paul Soldner. Other works include: "Believe Me," a 30 second PSA for SB Rape Crisis Center, "Change Not Charity," a promotional video for The Fund For Santa Barbara and *Portraits of Survivors: Gela*, a short experimental documentary about a Santa Barbara based Holocaust Survivor.

Mark Schuller - Co-Producer/Co-Director

Mark Schuller is Assistant Professor of African American Studies and Anthropology at York College, the City University of New York. Schuller spent over two years in Haiti, spanning the contemporary political crisis, studying women's nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). During this two-year research at one of these NGOs, he befriended the women staff and volunteers, earning their trust through patient research, visiting people in their homes, and choosing to stay in Haiti during the violence in solidarity. Schuller has kept in regular contact with the women who implored him to make this film ever since, visiting Haiti three times per year. In addition to understanding contemporary Haiti, Schuller's research contributes to

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globalization, NGOs, civil society, and development. Schuller has published four peer-reviewed articles, and as winner of the APLA paper prize, another is forthcoming. He co-edited *Capitalizing on Catastrophe: Neoliberal Strategies in Disaster Reconstruction* (2008, Alta Mira). Schuller also co-edited *Homing Devices: the Poor as Targets of Public Housing Policy and Practice* (2006, Lexington), culminating years of experience working as a community organizer in the Twin Cities. Schuller is a founding member of the Human Rights and Social Justice Committee of the Society for Applied Anthropology, and is an active participant in several grassroots and global justice organizations, including Voices for Global Justice, Jubilee (debt cancellation), PUEBLO, and an ad-hoc coalition around Haiti's food crisis.

Gina Ulysse – Associate Producer

Gina Ulysse is Associate Professor of Anthropology and African American Studies at Wesleyan University. In addition to several articles, she is the author of *Downtown Ladies: Informal Commercial Importers, A Haitian Anthropologist and Self-Making in Jamaica* (Chicago, 2007), a transnational black feminist ethnography of female import/exporters. A performance artist and a poet, Ulysse also performs her one-woman show *Because When God is too Busy: Haiti, me and THE WORLD*. Her poetry has appeared in *27 Rue de Fleures*, *Jouvert*, *MaComere*, *Meridians*, *PoemMemoirStory* and the anthologies *Brassage*, *The Butterfly's Way*, *Resisting Racism and Xenophobia* and *Women on the Verge of Home*.

Claudine Michel – Associate Producer

Chair of the Department of Black Studies and Director for the Center for Black Studies Research, Dr. Michel received her BA in early childhood education from the Université d'Etat d'Haiti and an MA and Ph.D. in International Education from the University of California, Santa Barbara. Dr. Michel is researching the process of moral development among African-American women and youth. Other research interests include multicultural education, children's literature, educational television and Haitian religion. She is the author of *Aspects Moraux et Educatifs du Vodou Haitien* (Le Natal, Port-au-Prince, Haiti, 1995); and co-author of *Etude Comparative des Théories du Développement de l'Enfant* (DeBoeck/Université, Bruxelles/Paris, 1994). Her book *Offerings: Continuity and Transformation in Haitian Vodou* is forthcoming with Oxford University Press. Dr. Michel also co-edited a 2006 volume from Indiana University Press, *Haitian Vodou: Spirit, Myth, and Reality*. She is the editor of the *Journal of Haitian Studies*. Dr. Michel has also produced the only long-term educational children's programming for TNH, National Haitian Television, 150 hours of production.

"Poto Mitan brings honor and respect to the women who have been the true backbone of Haiti. In conditions of despair, they bring hope to a people by their efforts and well-reasoned arguments, by their keen intelligence, and their undaunted spirit."

- Patrick Bellegarde-Smith, Haitian author



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