

A HELPING HAND FOR THE HAITIANS;

Passaic resident is filling the role of honorary consul

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Body

PASSAIC TO Jean Claude Levy, **honorary consul** of Haiti in New Jersey, his title is not merely decorative. Rather, Mr. Levy, who is not a Haitian, sees himself as **helping** the thousands of Haitian immigrants in New Jersey who live in poverty. He considers his mission as one of assisting them in settling in a school or job.

The 38-year-old Mr. Levy lives at 110 Main Street here. He runs a secretarial school in East Orange called the First School, which teaches language skills in French and Spanish as well as typing, shorthand and the use of business machines. Many of his students are Haitian or Cuban.

Profile of Claude Levy, **honorary consul** of Haiti in New Jersey

Mr. Levy was born in Morocco and is still a French citizen. He first saw Haiti in 1971 while on his honeymoon. "My American wife and I looked at a map of the Caribbean - and there was Haiti," he recalled. "I said, 'Let's have an adventure,' so we went to Haiti.

"It was love at first sight. I felt that, in many ways, Haiti is like Morocco. The climate and the people are very similar. The people are themselves and exist independently of the political climate."

Noting that Haiti is only 70 miles from Cuba, Mr. Levy said he did not think that the United States should "overlook a friendly country so close to its border."

According to Mr. Levy, his secretarial school is the only American school with branches both in the United States and Haiti. The status of many **Haitians** lies somewhere between immigrant and refugee, for the situation there does not present a sufficient emergency to permit them to be classified as people who have fled to avoid persecution.

Each Haitian must be granted asylum on an individual basis. "Many of these people are waiting for their standing to be determined before they register their children in American schools," Mr. Levy said. "Meanwhile, they themselves cannot find work."

Since September 1980, when he was appointed **honorary consul**, Mr. Levy has been working with Representative James J. Florio, Democrat of Runnemede; Representative Peter W. Rodino, Democrat of Newark, and other members of the New Jersey Congressional delegation. They have been trying to get support for legislation that would allow Cuban and Haitian immigrants to be able to convert to permanent **resident** alien status after two years in this country.

Mr. Levy, who said that New Jersey's **Haitians** - they are second in number only to those in Florida and New York City - would like to establish a Haitian civic center in East Orange.

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The center would acclimate the Haitians to American life and help them decide how to earn a living. "There is a need for schools in New Jersey to accommodate these Caribbean people," Mr. Levy said. "I decided to take it upon myself in the mid-1970's to try to help educate these people, but there is much more to be done."

Mr. Levy said that he traveled to Haiti 10 to 15 times a year and had conferred with President Jean-Claude Duvalier about the schools there.

"Haiti has the image of being a smiling, happy country where people are thinking poor," he said. "We are trying to change that."

According to a spokesman at the Haitian Embassy in Washington, many countries that cannot afford to establish consulates welcome people who wish to serve as honorary consuls.

An honorary consul cannot grant passports or carry out official duties. However, he can inform the public about the country he represents and help to establish a welcoming agency for people, such as Haitians, who arrive in this country.

"He (Mr. Levy) is there to promote Haiti in this country," the Haitian Embassy spokesman said. "He was appointed by the ambassador as a non-full-time representative, and he seems to be doing a very good job of letting people know about Haiti."

Graphic

Illustrations: photo of Jean Claude Levy photo of Kendall Franklin teaching Business English

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