

KOSANBA Haiti & Haitian Vodou Statement

July 9, 2021

The Board of KOSANBA, the Scholarly Association for the Study of Haitian Vodou, acknowledges the tragic loss of life and troubling news of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse's assassination and the injuries to First Lady Martine Moïse on July 7th, 2021.

Such horrific acts of violence threaten our political institutions and our civil liberties. We offer our condolences to all those who are grieving. We also recognize that such violent political affronts disproportionately impact the most vulnerable, including women, children, members of the queer community, and marginalized religious communities.

As such, we specifically condemn the recent deliberate violence against Vodouizan and their Vodou temples in Martissant, Fontamara, and Mariani, Haiti, including damage to the Lakou Bovwa. We stand in solidarity with all of the manbo, oungan, and ounsi who have suffered this devastating destruction, a remnant of the horrifying violence enacted against Vodou communities in various periods of Haitian history.

Lakou Bovwa and other Vodou temples are a national treasure, serving as vibrant cultural and spiritual links to Haiti's African heritage. To brutally damage them is to inflict a deep wound into the nation. The visible injuries are shocking, but the intangible reverberations into the neighborhood and into the nation reach far beyond. Material devastation visited upon these religious sites signifies hatred against places, practices, and people dedicated to healing and endurance.

In our environmentally and economically fragile societies, the most vulnerable often seek refuge in the sanctuary of their sacred abodes that have served generations before them. As the keepers of tradition, those who protect these sacred spaces and attend to the universe's care see this not only as a right but a responsibility. We stand in solidarity in acknowledging their right to be the guardians of customs that offer continual meaning and purpose.

The Board of KOSANBA (Kongrè Santa Barbara) joins with the people of Haiti as we urgently decry this wanton destruction of Haiti's political leadership and precious Vodou communities. We advocate for the restoration of peace and security in Haiti, and stand in solidarity with all of those affected in this difficult moment.