

March 2021

Consular Newsletter



Hello everyone,

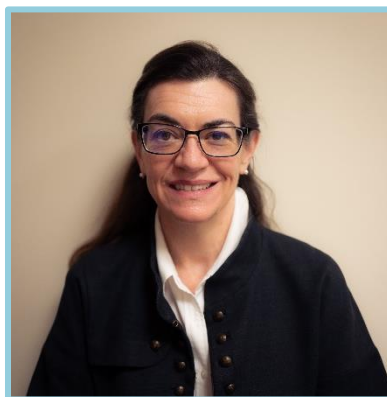
I'm Doni Phillips, the Chief of the Immigrant Visa Unit.

First, happy Women's History Month!

At the Embassy, we are celebrating the achievements of women around the world all month, and we all wore purple on March 8 to mark International Women's Day. The celebration of this day goes back to 1975, when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the resolution to observe this day annually, "to recognize the fact that securing peace and social progress and the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms requires the active participation, equality and development of women; and to acknowledge the contribution of women to the strengthening of international peace and security." I hope you find a way to mark Women's History Month here in Haiti or in the United States!

This month, we also have an important update regarding immigrant visas. The Presidential Proclamation that previously restricted the processing of many immigrant visas was [lifted](#) as of February 24, 2021. What does this mean for applicants? The U.S. Embassy in Port Au Prince is now able to resume processing limited numbers of immigrant visas in all categories, based on existing prioritization, which is determined by visa categories, petition date, and completion of the documentation process.

That said, our Consular Section is still operating at a reduced capacity due to COVID-19 precautions.



*Pictured: Doni Phillips,
Chief, Immigrant Visa Unit*

This means that, even though we are now able to schedule interviews across all immigrant visa categories, we are doing so on a limited basis. Applicants will be contacted directly by the National Visa Center or the U.S. Embassy's Immigrant Visa Unit when their interview has been scheduled. Immigrant visa applicants should be ready to present all requested documents and to provide additional evidence of their relationship with their petitioning family member at the time of their

interview. Applicants who come to their visa interviews unprepared add significant and unnecessary delay to the processing of their own cases. We would always prefer to process visa cases to conclusion as quickly as possible; applicants who are well-prepared can help us and help themselves at the same time! Please be assured that we are doing our best to schedule cases for interview as quickly as possible. Thank you for your patience and your cooperation as we continually work to serve the public while mitigating the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

You'll also find in this newsletter the start of our series, "Ask the Consul," where one of our officers answers a frequently asked question. This month we're providing tips and guidance for student visas.

And lastly, please check our [Embassy website](#) for the most up-to-date information about everything from American Citizen Services to COVID-19 testing requirements for travel. If you have a question about a U.S. visa application, please write to support-Haiti@ustraveldocs.com.

Celebrating Women of Courage in Haiti and the U.S.

Women's History Month is observed every March to highlight the contributions of women to events in history and contemporary society. It is a time to reflect on progress made, call for change, and celebrate acts of courage and determination by women globally. Here we highlight the achievements of a few women whose influence can be felt throughout Haiti, the United States, and beyond.

Marie-Jeanne Lamartinière



Lamartinière is one of the few known Haitian women to serve in the army during the Haitian Revolution. Dressed in a male uniform, she fought alongside her husband, displaying her skill with both rifle and sword during the Battle of Crête-à-Pierrot. When not fighting from the ramparts with admirable courage, she would spend her time nursing the injured soldiers around her. She was known for her ability to make swift decisions in the face of hard situations, a quality that made her a valuable comrade in battle.

Karine Jean-Pierre

Karine is a Haitian-American political campaign organizer, activist, and political commentator, currently serving as the White House Deputy Press Secretary. She is a former lecturer in international and public affairs at Columbia University, where she received her MPA in 2003. Jean-Pierre gained prominence in politics serving in the Obama White House as a regional political director and a director in his re-election campaign. She was born in Martinique to Haitian immigrant parents. She has made history as the first out Lesbian and first Black woman press secretary in the White House.



Naomi Osaka



Born to a Haitian father and Japanese mother, Naomi Osaka is a professional tennis player who has been ranked No. 1 by the Women's Tennis Association and is the reigning champion at the U.S. Open and the Australian Open. In 2018, she defeated 23-time Grand Slam singles champion Serena Williams in the final of the U.S. Open to become the first Japanese and Haitian player to win a Grand Slam singles title. In 2020, Osaka was the highest-earning female athlete of all time. She has also gained significant recognition as an activist, having showcased support for the Black Lives Matter movement during her matches.

Ask the Consul: Student Visas



Each month we'll be answering some of your frequently asked questions. For March, we're focusing on Student Visas for those who are interested in pursuing higher education in the United States.

Q: When should I begin applying for a student visa?

A: Ideally, you should begin the U.S. university application process 12 – 18 months prior to your study in the U.S.

Q: Is there anything I should do before beginning the application process?

A: You should first do a self-evaluation during which you consider your strengths, weaknesses, interests, and career goals. This will help you understand what skills and knowledge you need to acquire while studying at a university in the U.S. If you have a guidance counselor at your school, they could help you take the first steps, or you can contact your local [EducationUSA](#) advisor.

Q: How do I find the right program?

A: With over 4,000 accredited U.S. universities, it is important for you to research universities and colleges thoroughly to identify the ones that best fit your academic, financial, and personal priorities. Many resources exist for finding the right program, including [EducationUSA](#) and the [U.S. Embassy website](#).

Q: How expensive is it to study in the U.S.?

A: U.S. education and the application process can be very expensive. It's important to spend time looking into avenues by which to finance your education. This can be through personal funds, scholarships, and financial aid at U.S. universities, or external sources of funding. Each state and program are different.

Q: What do I need to include in my application to a U.S. university?

A: Application requirements vary but most require that you submit transcripts, test score reports, essays, vaccination records, and letters of recommendation. They may also require that you provide financial documents.

Q: Once I'm accepted to a program, am I guaranteed a student visa?

A: No. The student visa application process is entirely separate from the university application process. Just because you are admitted to a U.S. college or university does not guarantee that you will be found qualified for a visa. More information on nonimmigrant visas can be found on the [U.S. Embassy's website](#).

Q: Is the Embassy open for student visa appointments?

A: We are pleased to announce that we are now conducting a limited number of student and exchange visitor nonimmigrant visa interviews. Visa appointments are available for applicants in the F, J, and M visa categories with an approved I-20 or DS-2019 form, including immediate family members who are eligible to apply for F-2 and M-2 visas.

For more information about studying in the U.S., please visit:

- [U.S. Embassy website](#)
- [Studyinthestates.dhs.gov](#)
- [Education-USA Advising Center](#)

Travel & Security

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Haiti – Level 4: Do Not Travel

The U.S. Department of State has issued the highest level “[Level 4: Do Not Travel](#)” travel advisory for Haiti due to crime, civil unrest, kidnapping and COVID-19.

If you are in Haiti...

- Remember that demonstrations, tire burning, and roadblocks are frequent, unpredictable, and can turn violent. Emergency response, including ambulance service, is limited or non-existent.
- Always carry your cell phone & ensure it is charged before you travel. Ensure you have important numbers programmed into your phone. Consider using code names for family or friends.
- Avoid demonstrations and crowds. If you encounter a roadblock, turn around and get to a safe area.
- Arrange airport transfers and hotels in advance, or have your host meet you upon arrival.
- Travel by vehicle to minimize walking in public, and travel in groups of at least two people, whenever possible.
- Always keep vehicle doors locks and windows closed.
- Exercise caution and alertness, especially when driving through markets and other traffic-congested areas.
- Do not physically resist any robbery attempt/kidnapping.
- Do not travel in areas unfamiliar to you and be aware that navigation apps are highly unreliable in Haiti.
- Always make sure your vehicle is in good driving condition.
- Travel at times when traffic is expected to be lighter and avoid travel after dark in Port Au Prince.
- Ensure adequate spacing between vehicles to provide options for evading a potentially dangerous situation.
- Patronize shops or restaurants that provide secure, enclosed, and well-lit parking.
- Always inform someone, such as a family member or friend of where you are going and what time you expect to return. Minimize broadly publishing your travel plans on social media.
- **Enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)** to receive important information from the Embassy about safety conditions in Haiti, and help the Embassy contact you in the case of emergency. To enroll, visit: step.state.gov, or click the image to the right.



Health Resources & COVID-19

- 👉 **COVID-19:** For updated information about COVID-19 in Haiti, including where to get tested, entry/exit requirements, and quarantine information, [please visit the Embassy website](#).
- 👉 Make sure you are current on your vaccines, including tetanus and rabies. Treatment for prevention of rabies after you have been potentially exposed is non-existent in Haiti.
- 👉 Know where doctors and the closest emergency room are located in your area. Please visit the [Embassy website](#) for a list of hospitals and medical professionals in Haiti.
- 👉 Always keep basic medications and supplies on hand. Invest in a quality first aid kit and keep one in your car and at home.
- 👉 Always have medical insurance, including medevac insurance. If you need to be medically evacuated out of Haiti, you should contact a medevac company or an air ambulance service. Visit the U.S. Embassy website for a list of [Air Ambulance Services](#).

[cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus)



4 Haiti – Level 4: Very High Level of COVID-19

The CDC has issued a [Level 4 health advisory](#) for Haiti. Travelers should avoid all travel to Haiti. Travel may increase chances of getting and spreading COVID-19.

Advice for Travel During COVID-19

U.S. citizens should **avoid** non-essential travel. If you must travel, see our tips for safe and smart travel.

Travel is Not the Same

Be Prepared

- Air travelers bound for the U.S. must have a negative COVID-19 within 3 days of their flight. * (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/testing-international-air-travelers.html)

Rules for travel

- Wear a mask over your mouth AND nose
- Avoid crowds and stay 6 feet apart
- Wash hands often

Every Country is Different

Knowledge is Key

- Each country has different entry restrictions and quarantine rules (travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/ea/covid-19-information.html)
- Access to medical care varies widely
- Know if travel insurance protects your trip during a pandemic

Things Can Change Quickly

Have a Plan

- Know where to test before you come home and have a backup plan (travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/ea/covid-19-information.html)
- Have a financial plan if you test positive
- Enroll in STEP to get important alerts while you are abroad (step.state.gov)



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Online Resources:

- ✓ U.S. Embassy Port Au Prince's website: ht.usembassy.gov
- ✓ American Citizen Services (ACS) website: ht.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services
- ✓ U.S. Embassy Port Au Prince on Facebook: facebook.com/USEmbassyHaiti
- ✓ ACS on Facebook: facebook.com/ACSPortauPrince
- ✓ Haiti Travel Advisory: travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/haiti-travel-advisory.html



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