As a Haitian American scholar, I am very sad to say that in my lifetime I have come across very few Haitian role models that have directly impacted my life. Aside from the popular Toussaint L'Ouverture and Wyclef Jean, my exposure to positive Haitian role models has been very limited. However, with recognition afforded to the Haitian American Leadership Organization, I have been given the opportunity to expand my horizons and examine two historical figures who wrote history and whose impact on the community has consequently empowered my personal drive toward success. Jean Baptiste Du Sable and Pierre Toussaint were pioneers in their fields and have opened my eyes to contribution that Haitian have made to America, and the contributions that I can make as well.

In an examination of Du Sable's impact on American society it is important to note that not until 1968 was Du Sable rightfully recognized as the Founder of Chicago. The first known settler in the area of Chicago, Du Sable was born in Saint-Marc, Saint-Dominque, present-day Haiti, to Africa and French parents. Jean Baptiste Pointe Du Sable first arrived on the western shores of Lake Michigan by about 1779, after completing his studies in France, and built the first permanent non-native settlement at the mouth of the river just east of the present Michigan Avenue Bridge on the north bank. Du Sable developed Chicago into a trading center and operated the first sophisticated fur trading-post. By the end of Du Sable's development his estate included a house, two barns, horse-drawn mill, a bake house, a poultry house, a dairy and a smokehouse. His home was a 22 by 40-foot (12 m) log cabin filled with fine furniture and paintings. Du Sable was the first entrepreneur to successfully implement markets in Chicago. By bringing together consumers and goods he was able to maintain numerous contributions to American society through his work. His story pushes me to achieve my full potential so that one day I can also give back to my community.

In addition to Du Sable, another Haitian immigrant who's made similar contributions to the history of the United States of America is Pierre Toussaint. Born a Catholic Slave in Haiti, Toussaint arrived in New York in 1787 and began his apprenticeship to one of the city's leading hairdressers where he gained considerable popularity. At forty-one, he was freed from slavery when his owner died in 1807 and he later became quite wealthy. He fell in love with another slave, Juliette Noel, and purchased her freedom when she was only fifteen years old. Noel married Toussaint and together they set out to help those in need in New York City. They opened their home as a shelter for orphans, a credit bureau, an employment agency and refuge for priests and poverty stricken travelers. Toussaint also funded money to build a new Roman Catholic Church in New York, which became Old St. Patrick's Cathedral on Mulberry Street. Toussaint's charity continued on into his old age, and after death he was recognized for his benevolence and piety. In 1990, John Cardinal O'Connor, then Archbishop of New York had Toussaint exhumed from his unmarked grave and

reinterred in the crypt below the altar at St Patrick's Cathedral on Fifth Avenue. Toussaint's charity to his community is a trait that I have come to admire, and the genuine sympathy for those less fortunate is something that I have instilled in my personality because of his impact.

In summation, the contributions that both Jean Baptiste Pointe Du Sable and Pierre Toussaint have made to the history of the United States are facts that I will carry with me for the rest of my days because they inspire me to be courageous and bold. Had it not been for the HALO, I would have probably continued believing that I had no historical Haitian role models but now I know otherwise. Haitians have been contributing to America since the Colonial Era and continue to do so today.