

[At memorial, Somerville Haitians call for better recovery](#)

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A January 14 event at Somerville High School remembered the earthquake in Haiti one year later. ~Photo by Andrew Firestone

Local activist: Like quake happened yesterday

By Andrew Firestone

It is one year later, and the country of Haiti is still healing. Haitian expatriates in Somerville came together to remember the 300,000 people who lost their lives in last year's devastating earthquake in an event sponsored by the Haitian Coalition of Somerville.

"It is heartbreaking to see so many people living in inhuman conditions," said Franklin Dalembert, Executive Director of the Coalition. Having traveled to Haiti three times in the last year, Dalembert was disheartened by the lack of progress made in rebuilding Haiti. "It's like it happened yesterday," he said. "It is a failure."

The January 14 assembly at Somerville High School was highlighted by a firebrand speech by Patrick Sylvain, a professor at UMass Boston, who called upon Haitians to answer the question: "Why is your country so poor? Why is your country so messed up?"

"We fought among ourselves and so we did not achieve the dream we were trying to achieve," Sylvain said, highlighting the many civil wars and corrupt leaders that plagued Haiti for decades. "We are not resilient," he said talking about the Haitian people's past dealing with slavery, American domination, and Cold War haggling. "We simply refuse to die."

Patrick blamed former dictator Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier for destroying the fabric of Haitian society, but said that "we are going to build a country on top of the rubble."

Other speakers included refugee Altide Pierre, a mother of three who survived the quake that razed her home. Currently living in a Somerville shelter, Pierre remembers the tragedy that struck her home and community.

“We cannot reverse time,” said Patrick. “If I could, I would reverse time today.”

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