

# Local Haitians rally for rebuild at Somerville High

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Somerville — Haiti has gone through one of its most trying years in the more than 200-year-old nation's history, but you would hardly know it listening to an exuberant master of ceremonies at an earthquake commemoration Friday night.

“This group is about to wow this assembly, so please hold onto your seats, all right,” said Wadson Michel, introducing a troupe of dancers from Cambridge Rindge and Latin School to the stage at Somerville High School.

Despite the hip-hop and the high spirits, the painful memories of the devastating earthquake were not forgotten. Speaking through a translator in her native Haitian Creole, Altide Pierre described the fraught moments when she felt the earth shaking and barely escaped from a collapsing building.

Pierre said she was taking care of her child, and another child she was babysitting, when she heard the roar of the earth moving and just about managed to slip the children and herself out of a hole that opened in the building.

The event was hosted by the Haitian Coalition of Somerville and had to be postponed from the Jan. 12 one year anniversary because of the snow.

Speaker Patrick Sylvain, an educator at Brown, Harvard and UMass. Boston, said that Haiti needs engineering and investment so that people have permanent places to live.

“We are going to build a country on top of the rubble,” Sylvain said. In order to do that, upper class Haitians need to cast aside their bourgeoisie attitudes and work alongside their countrymen, he said.

The partially filled high school auditorium resounded with the sound of traditional music and original hip hop as Michel showcased all those in the audience who had traveled to the country recently in their efforts to help rebuild it.

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