



Leigh E. Carter

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Leigh Carter is the founder and Executive Director of Fonkoze USA. An early career in human rights activism in Central America led Leigh Carter to Haiti in 1991 where she was deeply motivated by the Haitian people, their culture, history, and struggle for democracy. Ms. Carter began working at the Washington Office on Haiti, the voice of the Haitian democracy movement on Capitol Hill. In 1996, she met the grassroots leader and founder of Fondasyon Kole Zepòl (Fonkoze) in Haiti, Father Joseph Philippe, and learned of Father Philippe's dream of economic democracy for the poor of Haiti and his dream of a "bank the organized poor could call their own." Father Joseph was determined to build a bank national in scope that would provide the poor, especially women entrepreneurs (*ti machann*, or rural market women), with the financial, educational and development services they required to rebuild their own country and their own lives.

In 1997, Ms. Carter founded Fonkoze USA, a U.S. non-profit organization with the mission to raise funds and awareness for Fonkoze. By tapping into the Alternative Investment movement of the U.S. religious community through the Interfaith Council on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR), Ms. Carter quickly built a revolving loan fund that provided the initial microcredit loans to solidarity groups of Haitian *ti machann*. In the past 13 years, Fonkoze USA has leveraged millions of dollars for the work of Fonkoze in Haiti, while raising awareness about economic development and economic democracy in Haiti.