

## Marie-José François (Haiti) – 2018 Women of Kulture Honoree *Founder Center for Multi-Cultural Wellness & Prevention*



Dr. Marie-José François, M.D., immigrated to the United States from Haiti in January 1983. She received her undergraduate degree from College Classique, Port-au-Prince, Haiti; her medical degree from the University of Medicine, Port-au-Prince, Haiti in 1982; and her master's degree in public health, with a concentration in Health Promotion and Education, from Loma Linda University, California in 1996. She is a certified health educator specialist, in 1997. In 2006, she became a Certified Diabetes Educator, State of Florida Department of Health. In 2007, she became a Certified Chronic Disease Self-Management T-Trainer, from Stanford University, California. Marie-José François has also been recognized by state and national agencies for advocating for funding to address HIV among migrant populations. Marie-José François, M.D., has a long and distinguished career in the fight

against today's most devastating threat to public health- HIV/AIDS. Dr. François began her advocacy in the early 1980s as a Health Educator at the Apopka Community Health Center, which is one of ten clinics that serve Orange County Government's Primary Care Access Network (PCAN). PCAN is a dynamic collaborative between Orange County Government, primary health care centers, community agencies, hospitals and other social services. Their mission, like Dr. François, is to improve the access, quality and coordination of health care services to the underinsured and uninsured populations of Orange County. Dr. François not only performs the invaluable service of providing health care to an underserved population but is able to directly communicate and comfort many of her patients due to her own Haitian heritage and multilingual ability.

Dr. François has also served on numerous AIDS-related committees to advocate for funding in the Central Florida community. She also had been chosen among national leaders to participate as member of Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) inaugural class of the HIV Leadership Institute in 2000. She has been recognized by state and national agencies in advocating for funding to address HIV among the migrant population and the utilization of indigenous populations to spread the HIV prevention message. To further illustrate her commitment to the underserved populations, she works 16-hour days and divides her time between two organizations in a leadership role. She currently is the Women's Health Services Manager at Community Health Centers and the Founder and Executive Director of the Center for Multicultural Wellness and Prevention, Inc. in Orlando.

**Trained in medicine and public health:** Marie-José François approaches community health issues from both clinical and population health perspectives. She also made that disclaimer "*I am a non-practicing physician; Primary prevention is my priority*". This approach is especially significant for understanding and addressing health disparities in medically underserved communities in which she works. Women's health is her passion. Professionals and residents alike respect Dr. François. She is a constant reminder to her colleague that their primary purpose is to serve the community and not just themselves.

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