

At least twice a year we try to visit our chapter in France, The French African Diaspora Chamber of Commerce. We were overdue for this trip because we were waiting to coincide with the announcement by our Board Member, Patrick Lozes, about his run for the presidency of France. This is big, really big. Also, Patrick had arranged an itinerary that promised to be special in regards to worldwide black entrepreneurship.

We left Dulles International Airport on the evening of September 18 and arrived at Orly International (Paris) Monday morning, September 19. The jet lag can hit you hard so Patrick allowed us to settle in and organize plus get a required nap in to put us back up to speed. The following is a summary of our visit.

We had a typical European lunch (2 ½ hours) with principals of **Digipay**. President Patrick Ulanowska and Vice President Gerard Leubel hosted us to a classic cuisine repast. During the lunch they presented an overview of their current initiative. They have created a payment card system with cutting edge technology. They have bought twelve patents and have incorporated a payment card system that is hacker proof. Their confirmation is that MasterCard has certified the security system of the process with a 3D certification. This is extremely impressive. They will be rolling out their product with banks in two distinctive nations at the end of this year. After they succeed in that, they want to partner with the National Black Chamber of Commerce and roll out their services in the United States. We made the deal and look forward to this historical roll out in the United States. First appointment – a home run!

www.digipay.fr

Our next appointment was with Frederic Sichler who has a deep background in the music and film business. After many years in the classical and jazz music industry plus a deep background in films (Warner Brothers to name one) he has one last goal. He wants to develop Sub-Saharan Africa with a productive film industry. He wants the nations to develop a culturally enriched industry independent from Hollywood and Europe. He has a model that has been recently completed in the Middle East and Northern African. Included in this portfolio is a brilliant documentary done on the “Arab Spring” in Egypt. His vision is to create film festivals in regions of Sub-Saharan Africa. The first target is Botswana, representing the southern region of the continent. We have committed to begin this quest during our upcoming Trade Mission to Botswana in October. We are talking billions of dollars generated while we document our enriched culture in the Motherland. www.amanacreative.com , www.pachapictures.com . We are now in a groove.

We then journeyed to the Burgundy Region of the French wine country. As opposed to the bullet train we took a sedan (compliments of Patrick) to get the full flavor of the countryside. We met with Ray Walker, an African American French wine maker. He has been celebrated in the New York Times plus many other publications. What makes Ray unique is that he has been accepted by the historical and closed door wine makers of France. A native of San Francisco, he did this by humbly moving there and working the fields later to become a wine barrel cleaner. His French is now impeccable as he studied 16th and 17th century books which enabled him to speak flawless old French. The locals were impressed and took him in. They allowed him to buy their grapes and showed him the very classic process of wine making. He now makes Chambertin and Chermes Chambertin which are the “cadillacs” of red wine. Under a pledge of confidentiality he showed us his process and allowed us to taste a couple of fresh productions. It was heaven! His wine is in such demand that he acquires the purchase up front before he even starts to make a run. He is not taking any new customers! His model is a testimony of what can be done with a great amount of determination.

The next day we met a very dynamic sister, Hapsatou Sy. She is the founder and CEO of **Ethnicia Beauty Salons**

. She has her own brand of make-up and will have one hundred stores by the end of 2012. She has asked us to partner with her as she rolls out franchises in the United States. We certainly will. Stand by and view the opportunity to own a beauty salon franchise. In her first year, she did 2 million Euros. This, her second year, will yield 12 million Euros and she expects 100 million Euros in 2012.

www.ethnicia.com

Finally, we came to the climax of the trip. We participated in a reception that was the kick off of Patrick Lozes run for the presidency of France. Amongst hundreds of supporters I gave a motivational speech (among others) and pledged the NBCC support for our member in his endeavors. This effort will put diversity on the “map” in France and drive home the two key platform items – entrepreneurship and education. www.lozes2012.fr .

It was a good week in France. Allez la France!

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