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## Hip hop and konpa

in an intimate setting

Booking Haitian-born hip hop artist **Wyclef Jean**, and **Sweet Micky** -- the Haitian konpa music king whom Jean declared an MVP on his *Masquerade* album -- usually runs in the tens of thousands. Friday night, several hundred Haitian-American professionals got to experience the jam session for free.

Jean, who was in Miami working with Latin music sensation Shakira on a reggaeton-inspired single, joined Sweet Micky on stage in a ballroom at the James L. Knight Center. The konpa artist was headlining a reception to kick off a three-day conference by the Haitian-American Leadership Organization, a newly formed group hoping to promote a different kind of image of Haitians by tapping Haitian-American professionals to become more involved in their community.

"This is important with what we are trying to do with the next phase of Haiti," Jean told The Miami Herald. He is becoming increasingly involved with the issues affecting his troubled Caribbean homeland.

Wearing a black T-shirt declaring "We are all Refugees," the star of one of the biggest-selling hip-hop acts ever, the Fugees, came to the reception at the invitation of Sweet Micky, who donated his talent to the affair. Before his arrival he was at North Miami's Hit Factory recording studio with Shakira and at Little Haiti's Sant La Neighborhood Center, where he spent the afternoon hanging out with executive director Gepsie Metellus.

"Micky is my political advisor, and he tells me what to say . . . so there will be no discussions of [former Haitian President Jean-Bertrand] Aristide on the podium tonight," Jean told the crowd, to the sound of laughter.

Then addressing the crowd in Haitian-Creole, he said, ``If we want to advance [as Haitians] we need to have HALO. . . . If they want the Haitian vote, we are the ones they are going to have to come to."

During the evening, Jean posed for photos, signed autographs and showed off his best konpa moves as Micky worked the crowd into a frenzy. Jean even showed an admiring group of youngsters his latest flips and hip hop moves before taking the guitar and microphone to belt out Bob Marley's *No Woman No Cry*, and *911*, the duet he made with soul singer Mary J. Blige.

-- JACQUELINE CHARLES