In Flore’s final message for the Bulletin, at the end of 2017, she enthusiastically celebrated the accomplishments of our students and faculty as she always did. This issue of the Bulletin is devoted to celebrating her own accomplishments and to convey at least some small sense of what she meant to the members of our departmental community. May it serve as both a memento of the times we had with her and as inspiration to move forward in the spirit of community that Flore Zéphir always nourished as Chair, professor, colleague, friend and mentor.

Flore With Our Community

With guests Chris Okonkuo and Juan Tomás Avila Laurel as well as Michael Ugarte

With Charles Presberg and sons Stephen, Michael and Philip

With Juanamaria Cordones-Cook and Ed Mullen
Farewell to dear colleague and friend Flore Zéphir given by Juanamaria Cordones-Cook at 12/22/17 memorial service:

Good morning! I feel honored that Bambi has asked me to say a few words this morning.

No person in my professional life and probably in the life of most of my colleagues in Romance Languages has had the positive impact Flore Zéphir had.

Like most of us gathered here today, I met Flore at the University of Missouri. My husband and I joined MU in 1989, one year after Flore and Bambi had arrived. Her office was adjacent to mine on the 2nd floor of the Arts & Science building. We instantly became lifetime friends. Our friendship was consolidated through our children, Bambi and our son Nicholas. They were classmates for 10 years. Then they went their separate ways to college.

Flore was a rare gem with wisdom beyond her age and experience. With a great sense of humor, she would call herself “a wise old owl”.

She had a uniquely deep understanding of the human condition and, regardless of differences, she was always willing to help her faculty, the students, and whomever needed assistance. Whenever she saw potential, she would foster its emergence. She encouraged and highlighted the best in each individual and genuinely celebrated everyone’s accomplishments and successes.

Flore quietly and humbly practiced the rare art of complete selflessness and transparency.

Flore created and nurtured a peaceful and safe work environment. It was a joy coming to work!

She touched so many lives. She projected a protective umbrella over family, friends and colleagues. Her departure leaves us with profound grief, a feeling of void, and an unsettling sense of orphanhood.

When my mother passed away some time ago, a friend shared a Japanese tradition with me, something I have never forgotten. I wish to share her wisdom with all of you, but especially you, Bambi. According to this Japanese tradition: no one is completely gone while there is someone who knew and remembers that person.

Flore was a tireless leader of the highest human quality and integrity. (continues on p. 3)
She possessed a sense of mission:

- in the midst of problems, she would bring solutions;
- in the midst of injustice, she would bring fairness;
- in the midst of chaos, she would bring order and calm;
- in the midst of disrespect, she would bring civility; and
- in the midst of suffering, she would bring compassion.

Wherever she appeared, a bright light of caring and decency emerged.

Flore came to this world to leave it a better place.... and we know she did.

She leaves behind a legacy of generosity, inclusiveness, harmony, justice, and humanity. None of us will forget it. Personally when facing a difficult situation, I will ask myself--and I have already done it: “What would Flore have done here?”

19th-century English writer Albert Pines must have anticipated our Flore when he wrote: “What we do for ourselves dies with us. What we do for others and the world remains and is immortal.”

My dear Flore, I am so grateful to have known you and to have been your friend. I already miss you terribly ... May you rest in peace.

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Dr. Flore Zéphir was an esteemed colleague, a friend, a mentor, and a model of selfless leadership. But it was her humanity and the overwhelming power of love she radiated so naturally that made us all feel like orphans when she left us. I love you Flore and will miss you to eternity.

-Daniel Sipe

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Memories and Tributes

I have known Flore for years. It has been an honor and a pleasure to be working for her and with her in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures. Her honesty, her good humor, her warmth and kindness for all, faculty and students and staff alike, have been a shining model of leadership. Her unexpected death, after a grueling and almost twelve hours surgery, between a hopeful prognostic at around 5 pm and her passing away two hours later in ICU on December 15 was an appalling shock and a heartrending blow to both my husband and I. Despite our bitter tears, we should all remember her as a beacon of human kindness and probity. She was always there for us all, and she will always be in our hearts.

-Nancy Molavi

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For me Flore embodied values such as transparency, justice, commitment and most significantly, compassion. She was very intelligent in both an analytical/rational and an emotional sense and put those gifts to great use in the service of these values. In particular, her commitment and compassion for students and colleagues at MU and within our departmental community as well as the Afro-Romance Institute, epitomize to me the meaning of the word solidarity. “Her door was always open” does not only describe her behavior but also a kind of state of being that she nurtured in herself and inspired those around her to emulate, though few could match Flore in that regard. Over time, my own relationship with her matured from that of a mentor-mentee to a collaborative, collegial one and I learned a lot from her about being a responsible, productive and collegial member of a scholarly community. I am deeply saddened at her unexpected passing, but I will never forget her supportive, compassionate spirit, which was evident throughout the entirety of the dozen years or so that I was lucky enough to know her. I am confident that in times ahead she will continue to be a model to me and to all those who knew her. Thus it is most assuredly “com muitas saudades” that I say, rest in peace, Flore.

-Jack Draper

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Memories and Tributes

There is something about our beloved Flore that we all know yet perhaps don’t acknowledge as much as we should. Far more than most people who work in universities (I include myself), Flore loved and appreciated the intellectual challenges that were offered to us by invited guests. She attended all our lectures, and many of those organized by other departments. She did this not out of obligation—although of course that was part of it—she came, she listened, she reacted, and asked questions because Flore was genuinely interested in the perspective that the guest was offering. This is what an institution of higher learning is about. I recall that when our department sponsored a lecture that I attended, I would try to make my presence known to Flore, and when she saw me she smiled as if to say, “So happy to see you here, Miguel…” And in this I’m sure I’m not the only one. We wanted to let her know that we were trying to be like her: good citizens.

“You don’t know what you’ve got ‘til it’s gone.” Joni Mitchell wrote that in the sixties, about paving a “paradise to put up a parking lot.” I think of that song, “Big Yellow Taxi” now that Flore is no longer with us. As so many of us know, and as many of us have said, Flore was all natural—and now she’s gone. She appreciated all of us, saw the good in all of us, and there was no nonsense in her appreciations, she was genuine in every way. We know this now more than ever because she’s gone.

Then again maybe that line, “You don’t know what you’ve got ‘til it’s gone,” doesn’t pertain to us because, if you believe in Haitian and other Caribbean/African spirits, ancestors, or gods/goddesses, like the ones portrayed in one of the last lectures the Afro-Romance Institute organized, “The Paintings of Erik Olivera Rubio,” and if you saw Flore there, like I did, you might suspect that she hasn’t really gone. Every time I see a picture of her, I think of one of those African goddesses; I’m convinced she’s still with us.

-Michael Ugarte

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As students of Dr. Flore Zéphir's last class, we can fondly say that during her final semester teaching at Mizzou she was happy. Regardless of her personal circumstances, she came to class with a warm smile and a kind heart. That is how we will remember our beloved professor, who taught us not to sweat the little things and that hard work, patience and dependability are more important than perfection. Flore was special, she had a certain finesse about her that lightened any situation and made anyone who spoke to her feel like the center of her world. Without her presence, we feel a large part of our academic family is missing and we know graduating will not be the same without her. However, whenever we feel sad we find comfort in remembering our time with her during our final class. Her vivacious energy, compassion, and dedication to her students will always be ingrained in our memories. We are grateful for having met such a wonderful, strong and unique woman, and will forever carry Dr. Flore Zéphir in our hearts.

- Submitted on behalf of the graduate students in Dr. Zéphir’s course on bilingualism, including Luísa Neves, Mindy Burkhardt, Sarah Laudin, Edgar Martinez, and Kelly de Souza

With Ed Mullen and guest William Luis
Among her larger academic projects, Flore Zéphir published several works related to the experiences and identities of Haitians and Haitian American migrants to the United States. Her 2001 monograph, *Trends in Ethnic Identification Among Second-Generation Haitian Immigrants in New York City*, to take one prominent example, was described by reviewer Benjamin Bailey as “an ethnographically rich account of issues of acculturation and identity faced by the children of Haitian immigrants and refugees in New York City” which includes a “refreshingly passionate critique of the United States social and economic structures that hinder Haitian immigrants' achievement of material well-being and ethnic/racial pride.”

Flore Zéphir served distinguished terms as Chair of the Department of Romance Languages between 2008-2013 and returning for the Fall 2017 semester. Beyond her meticulous and personal touch in keeping the department running smoothly as Chair, she also was involved in the running of the Afro-Romance Institute. As noted on its website, “in her role as Director from 2008-2016, Flore Zéphir was instrumental in making the Afro-Romance Institute a vibrant meeting place for scholars, artists, writers, and film-makers to dialogue on the African diaspora, its arts, languages, literatures, and history. During her tenure, she contributed to the Institute’s visibility nationally and internationally.” She worked tirelessly with other members of the Institute’s Advisory Board to promote the sharing of research in the field within our campus community, and to bring a variety of artists from international Afro-Romance communities to share their work with MU’s faculty and students. She helped give incentive to many initiatives and events, contributing her own ideas and making those of others come to fruition through always fostering a collaborative academic and collegial atmosphere.

Map from Flore Zéphir’s *The Haitian Americans* (Greenwood Press, 2004)